

GT

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why Drag Race
was 'awful'

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Issue!**

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



When I was a kid – which I'm still trying to pretend really wasn't that long ago – summer was never really about the sun, or a holiday abroad. It was about summer specials.

Bumper editions of my favourite magazines, poured over time and time again, well-thumbed for several school-free months. Well, comics, really. But my favourite of those were the horror anthologies, such as the short-lived *Scream* comic, which revelled in tales told at night, or in the Halloween-fuelled autumn months. So it's always a little strange for me to embrace GT's sunny summer edition – we do 13 issues a year, so there's always an extra month that needs a name! Fortunately for you, I haven't filled it with ghouls and frights – it's not about me, after all. Though you will find a few things that I grew to have more of an interest in as the years went by... Being a pasty-skinned Scot, my skin never took too kindly to the rays, so a 'summer' or 'beach' body never really crossed my mind, and doesn't now. I say do whatever makes you happy. In truth I've never really been fond of the heat and the warmth. Fortunately, being Scottish, that was never really too much of a problem. But in London that's not the case, as an insufferable city becomes even more problematic and I long for the cool, cold times of winter – and, of course, Christmas and all that brings with it. Which for me generally means having a 'hibernation body', something I find far too easily achievable. Enjoy your summer, and hopefully it's special for you without too many things that go bump in the night! ■ [Darren Scott](#) @darren_scott



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PAGE 33**





He's been making quite a splash from the top board in the European Diving Championships – and now he's back to cause a bigger splash on the pages of GT. Yes, Freddie Woodward is this month's GT Fitty...

You've just competed in your first senior European championship. How did that go?

Really well, actually. I got a silver medal at junior level before, so I made the big step to senior level this year. And I made three out of three finals as well, which is crazy! I was one of the youngest competitors there at 19-years-old, so it was all just really exciting.

Do you have a favourite part of yourself? Being honest, I do quite like my abs. They get quite well developed with diving. After my abs, probably my legs.

Do you have many gay fans?

Yeah! A lot of my supporters are gay. Either people that contact me on Twitter or who write in letters are. The bond between the gay community and divers is so strong. People seem to engage really well with diving – especially since Tom's fame went crazy – and that's really helped younger athletes like me. People are always asking me what I'm doing and want to keep updated with my training.

What's the worst date you've ever been on? [Laughs] We

were watching a film once and I started choking on a wine gum, and tried doing the whole casual coughing thing. It didn't work. It built up to this huge climax of spluttering. They were

gt fitty



probably embarrassed for me.

Do you have a man crush? I guess everyone would expect me to say Tom Daley. He's a really good looking guy, but if anyone, I think I'd say my diving partner Jack Haslam. He's gonna totally kill me.

Has Tom's coming out helped others within diving to be open about their sexuality, then?

YEAH! The ultimate thing would be if it wasn't an issue at all. All athletes should be comfortable to be who they are. There's a lot of openly gay divers across the world and I'd like to think, statistically, that diving has quite a good coming out rate. So hopefully, from Tom doing it, it will encourage other young athletes to speak openly about their sexuality.

Divers always have great bodies.

What's your current fitness regime like? People don't realise that with diving, there's a massive strength aspect to it. If you're not strong, you can't jump high enough or even make the dives. I do three hard weight lifting sessions a week and at training I'll do abdominal work and core tension, too. Plus I've started taking up Salsa lessons as well, so it's intense!

...so you dive and dance? The modern man, then? [Laughs]

Oh, hell no. I've only just started taking Salsa for fitness. But I enjoy dancing too, actually. I've got quite a good sense of rhythm. At parties and things, I'm always the first one dancing, so I thought I should utilise my skills. Plus, it looks sexy too [laughs].

Do you have a long term goal as a diver? For any athlete, it has to be Olympics is the goal. That's what I'm striving for really. Diving is very competitive, especially in the events that I do currently. Making it to the games in Rio maybe a little tricky but certainly Tokyo is what I'm aiming for. That's the real dream. ■

Keep up to date with Freddie's diving career by following him on Twitter, @freddiebevis

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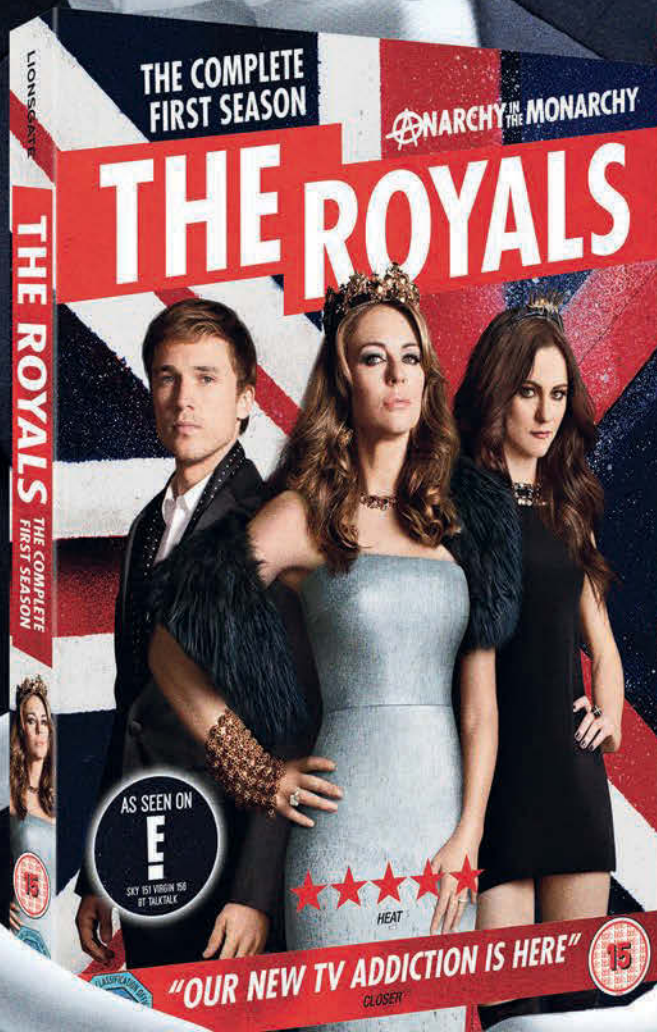
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[summer/15]

let the music play!

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Glitter up and get out at the return on Liverpool's House of Suarez Vogue Ball. Practice the moves and get down on the floor alongside other dance enthusiasts at this camp extravaganza. This award-winning event celebrates the merger of fashion and the wonders of gay culture. So grab that glitter and let your body move to the music. All together now, come on, Vogue... ■

Taking place at Liverpool's Camp and Furnace on 10 October, tickets on sale now priced £18-£25 via houseofsuarez.co.uk





a bunch of hits

Considering they've not released an album since 2009's *Viva* – hurry up please, ladies – Bananarama are certainly making up for it with gems from the vaults. Following the special edition releases of their first six albums, and a mammoth 36 track Megarama remix set, comes this giant box set – *In a Bunch: The Singles 1981-1993*. Yes, that's 33 CDs, containing every single, B-side and remix originally issued worldwide. That's more than 100 tracks not included on the afore-mentioned re-releases. It all comes in a ruddy great box, with a 48-page booklet, a poster, postcards and **STICKERS**. Now, about that new album... ■ Pre-order the set at bit.ly/in-a-bunch

SPEED DATE



3 July – 15 August

Explore the UK's biggest live outdoor walkabout theatrical experience in Lancaster's Edwardian Williamson Park. Relive the days of Oliver Twist and taste locally produced food alongside live theatre. visitlancashire.com ■

23 July

London's Royal Vauxhall Tavern will host an evening by RUComingOut to help fund special coming out books for kids in schools. From live music to DJ's and more, help make the future brighter for the next generation. rucomingout.com ■

25 July

Run, jump, swim and kayak around London's Docklands for this year's River Rat Race. Raise money for Shelter, test your strength and rush down the 50ft water slide as you battle this 10km course. londonriverratrace.com ■

Throughout July

Celebrate the life of Audrey Hepburn through a unique set of 60 classic and rarely seen prints at London's National Portrait Gallery. With magazines, film stills and archive material on show, discover the woman behind the name. npg.org.uk ■

From July 25

While the Queen is away... Walk along the 450m palace gardens or stand in the Grand Hall. A rare treat for those able to grab a ticket, head inside Buckingham Palace and claim your moment as a true queen for the day. royalcollection.org.uk ■

From Corrie to EastEnders, Neighbours to Home and Away, there's not many boundaries left to break when it comes to soap characters and storylines. But can you believe that Ramsay Street's Nate Kinski is only the second major gay character in the show's history? And a war vet, at that. We meet the man behind the man, Meyne Wyatt...

The Ramsay Street route to a pop career has been traversed by everyone from Kylie and Jason to Holly Valance via Stefan Dennis and Craig McLachlan. Hell, even Harold and Madge released a single. But Meyne Wyatt has no plans to join them. "I'd love to be the next popstar from Neighbours," he confesses. "I just wish I had a voice. I can hold a tune, but I wouldn't say you'd want to go out and buy my album."

We would, however, want to see Meyne – whose character Nate Kinski on the show is a real trailblazer – dancing through the streets of Sydney on a Mardi Gras float. It almost happened. He had friends taking place in the parade in March. "And I'd love to have gone along," the 24-year-old tells us. "Some of my friends did a #whataboutnate campaign to get me on a float, but I was working in Melbourne at the time so I couldn't go. It would've been a lot of fun."

Meyne's in Melbourne again when he takes GT's call, enjoying a day off before being back on set playing one of the most complex characters in the soap's 30-year history. Nate's a real boundary-pusher: He's only the second gay character to feature prominently on the show and the first indigenous actor in a recurring role. Plus, when he popped up in Ramsay Street last year, he was back from a tour of duty in Afghanistan and suffering from post traumatic stress disorder.

"So when I first came on the show, a lot of the stuff that was thrown at

me was pretty heavy," the actor says. "There was all the post traumatic stress stuff and he wasn't responding very well to the social aspects of life, so it was hard for him not to lash out."

Boyfriend Chris put up with Nate's mood swings, but they've now split because Nate wasn't happy with the hunky mechanic co-parenting his baby with Lucy Robinson. Like Chris, the actor who played him, James Mason, has relocated to the States. It means Nate gets to lighten-up a bit now, although he was already heading that way. "As time's gone by, the comedic element of the character has started to come out, so it's nice to be able to delve into that. It's not just about the dark stuff."

Neighbours fans were initially unsure about this new, volatile character. On the street, they'd come up to the actor and say how much they were enjoying his performance. But on social media? "When my first episode aired the reaction was a bit hostile because Nate was very different to a lot of other characters on the show. We were delving into those darker places, plus there was the fact he wasn't particularly neighbourly. Some people were negative towards him, but over time, they've slowly come around."

Hailing from the Western Australian town of Kalgoorlie, Meyne studied at drama school, did some theatre, made his film debut in *The Sapphires* and popped up in a couple of other things

before landing a major role on Neighbours. He's the show's first indigenous leading man, which he's understandably proud of. "It's a double-edged sword in the fact it's taken so long for this to happen, but it's also an exciting time," he says with what seems like a very level head on his young shoulders. "It's a very positive thing to show you don't have to be Anglo-Saxon to be on Neighbours."

He also thinks the fact Nate is gay has been handled perfectly on a show that only had gay people on the periphery, until Chris came along in 2010. "The great thing is that it didn't go in on that angle immediately. It allowed the audience to see Nate not as someone who was indigenous or gay, but just as a new character in Ramsay Street. It wasn't tokenistic. They introduced him as a person, then explored those aspects of him."

Meyne's, who is straight, has received positive feedback from gay viewers. "They seem to be really interested in someone who's not played in a stereotypical manner. He's just a guy who just happens to be gay and people have responded to that positively."

Before joining Neighbours, Meyne wrapped a key role in the thriller *Strangerland*, which premiered at this year's Sundance. He plays a handyman who works for a couple – played by Nicole Kidman and Joseph Fiennes, no less – and becomes a suspect when their children go missing. Nicole, of course, is Australian





WORDS SIMON BUTTON

acting royalty – and the young thesp was thrilled to find himself on the same set. Turns out she was lovely. “I only have good things to say about working with Nicole,” he enthuses, “and that’s not me being diplomatic – she’s a really lovely person. We had a full-on scene to do together and she knew I was a bit nervous, but she was really generous and supportive.”

He’s now back on Ramsay Street, seeing *Neighbours* as “a platform to go onto other things, but I’m happy to go with the flow at the moment”. When asked about forthcoming storylines he’s tight-lipped – as all soap stars are instructed to be – although he promises more comedy moments, with Nate working at the Waterhole and butting heads with bossy boss Sheila. “It’s a funny dynamic,” he laughs. “You’ll see a battle between those two.”

And will Nate be getting a new beau now that Chris has left? Meyne can’t go into detail, but yes, Nate is on the look-out for another fella. “I think he’ll have his ups and downs and take a couple of bumps along the way, but there’s something that might be brewing,” he teases.

His dream all-time *Neighbours* co-star? That’s an easy one for Nate to answer.

“Everyone is going to say Kylie Minogue, surely?” exclaims the man who has indie-Kylie classic *Some Kind of Bliss* on his iPod. “She’s synonymous with *Neighbours* and I’ve only heard really lovely things about her.”

And will be seeing him at next year’s Mardi Gras, schedule permitting? “I’d love to do it,” he tells us. Shirtless, perhaps? Meyne laughs. “You know what, if I had a couple of beers I wouldn’t mind stripping down.” ■

Neighbours is on Channel 5, weekdays at 1.45pm and 5.30pm, @neighbours



“

Hello my babies!
As I sit here penning this

article, I've just come back from NYC, attending my first event as an official authoress! I can't actually believe it. The event was called BookCon and I was there to promote the release of my first book, *The Diva Rules*. Please don't think it's your run-of-the-mill TOWIE autobiography. It ain't! We ALL have an inner diva just dying to get out and we ALL need to show it love on a daily basis. I promise you, you'll LOVE this book. You'll also laugh your ass off at what a fool I am.

Now, moving on to another huge event, the launch of RuPaul's Drag Race on TruTV in the UK. Have you all been watching and re-watching? I know you have, because my timeline was stuffed – and lord KNOWS I love a stuffed timeline. Sidebar – huge congrats to Liverpool's own The Vivienne for winning over Mama Ru, Katie Price and Jonathan Ross to become the RuPaul's Drag Race UK Ambassador! That

competition was FIERCE!

Now that season seven has crowned its queen, the gorgeous Violet Chachki, we can rest for a bit and look ahead – not only to season eight, but to the European Drag Stars at Sea cruise, which I'm DYING to board. My family will be accompanying me and it's even more special this time, because it's the first time my babies will be coming to the UK! Can you just imagine the amount of Primarni shopping that's going to take place? There are still tickets available via Al and Chuck Travel – and this time we set sail from Southampton on 2 October, so if you've never been before, now is the perfect chance. I know you're all right in the middle of your two week long British summer, but if you want to extend it, this is the best way to go about it.

So, until we meet again my loves, you know how to get at me. Hit me up on Twitter at @michellevisage, and pop along to see me at my website – michellevisage.com.

Love you.

XXX MV. ■

”

The top three T with Michelle V

01

Josie Maran's skincare line, especially the organic Argan Oil
OBSESSED with this. Use it for that youthful glow, fingers crossed. She sells it on QVCUK too!



02

LUSH bath bombs
I love the bubble bars and bath melts too, but bombs come first. Which ones do I love? ALL OF 'EM!



03

The Diva Rules
Pre-order on Amazon UK. Pretty please?



Hair by Hector Pocasangre, face by Sutan Amrull (Raja) and shot by Mathu Andersen. The best glam squad EVER.

Dear Michelle How do you feel about the latest LGBT accomplishments we're having this year so far?

From @jureich

Juliana, this year has been unbeatable thus far. Gay marriages, trans rights, equality. We're moving forward in a positive direction and not looking back. There are so many other countries that

have LGBT people being tortured, persecuted, arrested and even killed. These countries wouldn't even HEAR of taking the first steps – and we have to do what we can to support them and keep fighting for equality. I've said this many times and I'll keep on saying it – until we don't have to say the word “equality”, we keep on fighting. ■

What will you remember?



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[summer/15]

young at heart...

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THE
YOUNG

charlie
mikey

They're The X Factor foursome that took pop tracks to levels of camp that made even Louis Walsh blush. So obviously, we love them. With all their focus now on their debut album, we climb aboard the fun bus with Mikey and Charlie from Only The Young

On their time on The X Factor...

C: It's definitely interesting looking back now. For us, as a four with Parisa and Betsy, we loved it. The days are really long, the hours are horrendous and you work really hard to get to where you get to. But, I mean, it's worth it by the end.

M: It was kind of a love/hate kinda thing overall. It was absolutely incredible, but I wouldn't do it again. For me, it was the lack of time to rehearse. There was very little time to perfect anything.

On One Direction vs Zayn...

C: They've had a wicked career, with Zayn or without him. They met on that show and they got throw together so quickly.

M: Regardless of whether you come from that show or not, when you're talented guys and become famous, people will follow you around. With them, I guess it all just happened so quickly.

On gay fans...

C: I think if we have male fans that like Mikey and I, they're usually gay. I think it's great! We've got the most diverse fan base.

M: I can't think of any other band that can say they've got straight and gay girl fans and straight and gay male fans. Makes us unique.

C: Different people, different fans, different age groups, different sexualities. It's really nice, actually, to be able to have that.

On their man crushes...

M: I do look at Zac Efron and think he's a very beautiful human. I wouldn't mind looking like him...

C: My crush is a crush of two – David Beckham and Luke Bryan. They're both really good looking fellas.

On their future in the next 12 months...

M: I'd love to have a world stadium tour and a number one album.

C: Yeah, totally! ■

The single, I Do, is out 17 July @otyofficial, facebook.com/otyofficial.



AARON SIDWELL

KEEP COOL

Be a rider that's cool – and ride out this summer on this motorcycle of love. Cool Rider, the hit musical sequel to Grease that returned to London's glittering West End, has released its original studio recording that follows the unlikely romance from bowling alley to burger joint. And yes, that haunting medley Rock-A-Hula-Luau (Summer is Coming) is included as well. Move aside, cuz it's gonna rideeeeeee. ■

coolriderlive.com, [@coolriderlive](https://twitter.com/coolriderlive)

[summer/15]

british summertime



WORDS RYAN BUTCHER

YEARS & YEARS

Ahhhh, British Summer Time in Hyde Park. London truly kicked off the summer in style last month, with a line-up of all our favourite gays, queens and disco legends. We freaked out with Nile Rodgers and Chic, pulled up to the bumper with Grace Jones and span around with Kylie. And among it all, we even found time to head backstage and catch-up with our ol' friend Olly Alexander, frontman of our favourite pop band in forever, Years & Years...

Olly! How was it playing on the British Summer Time main stage? It was really fun. It's fun to be at an event like this. And to be on the same bill as Kylie and Grace Jones...

Did you see Kylie dancing along to King at the side of the stage?

I didn't see her until right at the end! And then it was, like, no pressure! [Laughs] She's been so supportive of us. She even retweets our videos! It's so surreal, because she was an idol when we were growing up.

...and you're sharing a bill with Grace Jones. She's an idol as well. She's insane. And she's been getting topless a lot recently on stage, so that's always something to look forward to. Get your Snapchat ready!

Big question – are you team Kylie or team Grace? Erm... Team Kylie. Wait, why are we picking teams? Why is this division happening? Why are you making the rivalry

happen? Why can't we just love everyone? [Laughs]

But Grace has to be the best Bond girl... She kills people with razor sharp butterflies...

I forgot she was a Bond girl! Oh, shit! That's good. They're both up there. They've both got things going for them.

This is the start of festival season. You're playing everywhere, aren't you? FUCKING EVERYWHERE! Yeah! [Laughs] Like, name a festival – we're playing it. Festival season is gonna be new for us. We've played a lot before, but were always on at like 10am. But this year, it's amazing having an audience, and festivals are much more like a party vibe. Plus, you get to play to your biggest crowds usually, so it feels like a really amazing opportunity. And to be on a main stage. We're like yes – godda make the most of it.

Seeing as the album is just about to come out, how've people been reacting to the new songs? Good, considering they probably only know us for one song. [Laughs] Yeah, really receptive. We try and tailor the set a little bit so it's more uptempo and we only do one sad song. People get bored and they wanna get a drink.

We're glad to hear you're still playing your cover of Blu Cantrell and Sean Paul's Breathe, though. We stopped and then we brought it back. Sometimes people would tweet us saying that Breathe was their favourite Years & Years song. But it's an R&B classic! It's such a banger. **So the album. Communion. We reviewed it. We gave it five stars [read the review on page 96 – music ed].** Yay! At least we'll have ONE five star review.

It just seems like it's the perfect summer party album. Yeah, I think so. It's got a few slow songs, but you can skip them. [Laughs] **Or listen to them when you're hungover and don't wanna get**

out of bed... Yeah, it can be your comedown.

Is there a period of nerves now it's about to be released? Yeah, but there isn't much that we can do now. People will either like it, or they won't... But I hope they do! **Of course, you've been speaking about your sexuality a lot more recently – starting with your exclusive interview a few months ago in GT. Have you found this has had a positive effect on your fans?** It's definitely been positive in almost every way imaginable.

Lots of people are wanting to have a conversation about sexuality. Loads of pop stars and the media talking about sexuality and gender – it's becoming so much more important. It's becoming more of a conversation. And I'm a big believer that if you want things to change, you have to embody that change. I've found that our fans, literally, most of them knew I was gay anyway. But they loved having another thing that they knew about me, and had somebody they could share their story with, if they had a need to share.

The fact is, you have fans that may have been struggling with sexuality issues themselves. And now they have someone they can look up to. Yeah, I hope that. I'd hope that I can help in one way or another. That'd be amazing. I feel like the only gay people I had to look up to growing up were pantomime gay figures, like Lily Savage and Dame Edna – and that's great! I want to celebrate that too. But there needs to be diversity, you know? Being gay doesn't mean you have to be a certain way. But it takes people to help show that. You just have to embrace your own sexuality. However much it makes you who you are, just embrace it. ■

Barclaycard's British Summer Time is all done for 2015, but visit bst-hydepark.com for any future news and announcements, facebook.com/bsthydepark, [@bsthydepark](https://twitter.com/bsthydepark). Meanwhile, Communion is out on 10 July, [@yearsandyears](https://twitter.com/yearsandyears), [@alexander_olly](https://twitter.com/alexander_olly)



[summer/15]

shiny and new



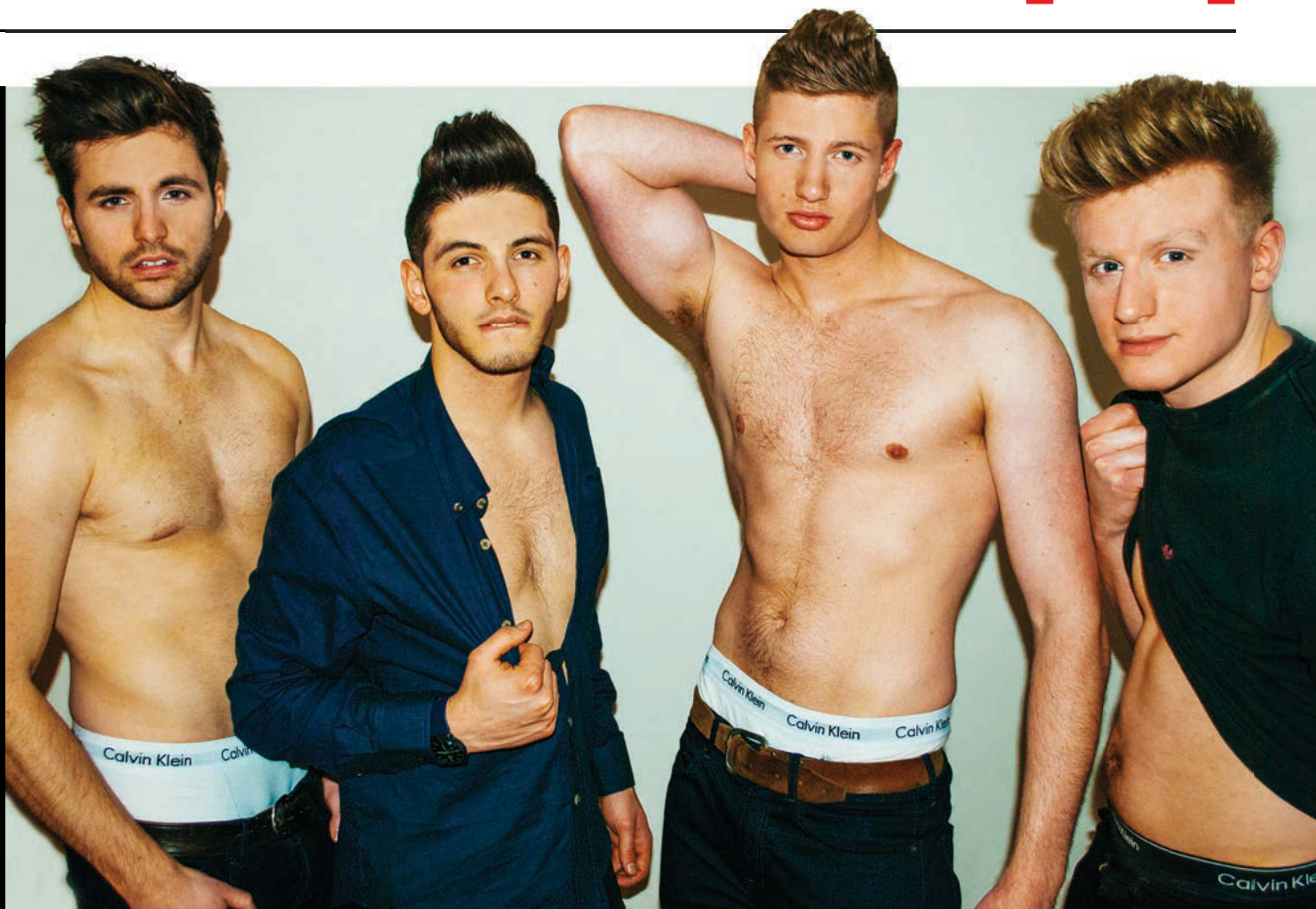
Cutting edge It's a pretty bold claim, but Braun say their Series 9 shaver is the world's most efficient and comfortable. Available in two options, it's their fastest, most powerful and closest shave yet – with a docking device that cleans and also makes it their most hygienic. But secretly we love that when it lights up it looks like a phaser from Star Trek. ■ From £269, braun.com

BEAUTIFUL THINGS

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POLAR COLLECTIVE

We caught up with the newest boyband on the block, ahead of their debut single *You Make Me Feel (Woah)* and album *The Polar Life*, both out now.

Jake Cardy

Age: 21

Plays: Vocals

Also known as:

The honest one

Interesting fact:

Has heterochromia – two different coloured eyes

Worst habit:

Is always sleeping

Favourite artist:

Bruno Mars

“My mum got some Black Opium, so she’s happy.”

Ally Newbigging

Age: 20

Plays: Sax, guitar & piano

Also known as:

The talented one

Interesting fact:

Is a big Harry Potter fan

Worst habit:

Extremely neat, the “expert at real life Tetris”

Favourite artist:

Fall Out Boy/Bruno Mars/
Michael Jackson

“Who wants to see Ally catch a marshmallow in his mouth?”

Adam Dodd

Age: 20

Plays: Guitar

Also known as:

The wise one

Interesting fact:

Can perform magic tricks

Worst habit:

Takes a while to wake up – isn’t a morning person!

Favourite artist:

Jason Derulo

“I ventured into card tricks. You’ll see me in Covent Garden next week!”

Gryph Ford

Age: 21

Plays: Drums

Also known as:

The energetic one

Interesting fact:

Loves to paint

Worst habit:

Sings all the time

Favourite artist:

Fall Out Boy

“I get up earlier these days to go in [the shower] before everyone else because you guys say I take too long!”

She's the daughter of an icon and a sister to a star. Yes, those two. But when the spotlight turns to her, can The Songbook of Judy Garland singer Lorna Luft stand centre stage and outperform against our sweetie jar of random questions?

WORDS WILLIAM CONNOLLY IMAGE JAMES BURTON



Sweetie Darling?



What's the rudest word that you know?

Probably fuck... [Laughs]

Do you say that a lot? Yeah. I do.

Do you ever worry about your weight?

All the time.

What's the worst date that you've ever been on? Oh lord! I'd have to say it was one when

I was like 16-years-old. It was awkward and totally uncomfortable. [Laughs]

What did you have for breakfast this morning? Cereal.

If you could be anywhere on a Sunday morning, where would it be? In bed with my husband.

Do you have a favourite word? My husband would say that sometimes I'm a victim of 'like'. Things are 'like' something else. I'm guilty, yet it annoys me when other people say it.

What was your worst subject in school? Maths.

Would you be good in a fight? YEAH!

What's the one word people use to incorrectly describe you? It'd probably would be: "She's like her mother, she's like her sister." I don't think that's fair to do.

Would you rather be at the seaside or by a swimming pool? Swimming pool.

How many hours of sleep do you need a night? Nine.

Are you in love? Yes.

Are you good at flirting? Am I good at flirting? Mmm no, I've been married too long.

Who's your guilty pleasure? David Muir, the ABC news anchor. Don't judge me! [Laughs] I have a crush on him.

Double denim: amazing or awful? Oh no, awful!

What's the most expensive thing you've ever bought? I'd imagine my house.

What's your campest moment? OH GOSH! I mean, my pink dress at the Hollywood Bowl. Well, that wasn't camp, it was pretty. It was cool. OK, OK, that was camp. I have to admit it! [Laughs]

Who's your style icon? I would have to say, probably, Jacqueline Kennedy.

Would you rather not eat or not speak for 24 hours? Oh, not speak.

Who or what's on your bedroom walls? I have a Warhol.

And what's the first thing you'd save if your house was on fire? Oh, definitely the Warhol! [Laughs]

What's your biggest fear? Dying.

Who was the last person to see you naked?

My husband.

If you could change one thing about your appearance, what would it be? My skin, without a doubt.

If you could go back and give your 15-year-old self some advice – what would that be? Get a sense of humour.

And best bit of advice for others? Get a sense of humour! [Laughs]

Favourite food? Avocados.

When you go on holiday, what's the one thing that you have to pack? A big hat.

If someone was to appear as you in a film about your life, who would it be and why? I would say, maybe, Sally Field – because she has a wonderful sense of humour and she's a team player.

Are you an Ellen or an Oprah fan? Both. I am. I watch both, so I'm an Ellen AND an Oprah fan.

What's the biggest diva tantrum that you've ever thrown? OK, I did throw one tantrum once in a theatre, because a director had cut an actor out of a scene and didn't tell me. I went on stage, and this actor wasn't there. I went upstairs and I got really, really, really, really angry. Actually, my dresser gave me things to throw. I wasn't gonna throw them, but she said, "Here, throw this!" [Laughs]

What annoys you the most? When people lie to me.

What film can you quote every line from? All About Eve.

What's the worst thing you've ever put in your mouth? Urrmmm, [pauses] I once mistook a face cream for toothpaste. That was disgusting. Yuk!

Three words that describe you in the morning are... OK... so, funny... disoriented – always! I'm always like, "Oh, wait, is it morning?" And then I'd probably say chatty. I just love to talk in the morning.

Can you drive? Oh yeah!

Would you eat a worm for £500? Would I WHAT?

Would you eat a worm for £500? ARE YOU CRAZY?

And finally, what's your favourite memory? Obviously sitting here talking to GT. It's been lovely... ■

Lorna Luft leads the UK tour of The Songbook of Judy Garland until 1 August, playing in Brighton, Bromley, Oxford and Woking. judygarlandssongbook.com
@judygarlandshow, @lorna_luft

WHEN SHE REVEALED HERSELF ON THE COVER OF VANITY FAIR, **CAITLYN JENNER** BECAME THE MOST FAMOUS TRANSGENDER PERSON IN THE WORLD. BUT WHAT DOES HER ARRIVAL MEAN FOR THE PROGRESSION OF TRANS RIGHTS? IS #CALMECAITLYN TRULY A TURNING POINT?

WORDS THOMAS LING IMAGE ANNIE LEIBOVITZ EXCLUSIVELY FOR VANITY FAIR

SO FAR THIS YEAR WE'VE SEEN A shocking General Election, the first country to vote en masse in favour of same-sex marriage, and Madonna get yanked down a flight of stairs. But if there's one thing 2015 will be known for, it's when a 65-year-old woman grabbed headlines the world over with just three simple words: "Call me Caitlyn".

Three decades after making the decision to medically transition, the Olympic hero and reality TV star formerly known as Bruce Jenner made history by revealing her true self to the world on the cover of Vanity Fair.

She even became the fastest-person ever to reach one million followers on Twitter – faster, even, than the President of the United States – proving that you're never too old to smash world records.

RuPaul, Janet Mock and Conchita Wurst all pledged their support for this new cultural icon, and Obama himself even tweeted her directly. "It takes courage to share your story," he told her. To put it mildly, Caitlyn Jenner was a big deal.

In fact, her welcome party has been so big, it's led to an inevitable debate – is Caitlyn Jenner the most important trans person to date?

After all, she might well be the most talked about member of the LGBT community in recent times. Even if it's transphobic comments from the likes of Snoop Dogg, who compared Caitlyn to a "science project", or Drake Bell's insensitive tweet: "Sorry... Still calling you Bruce". Narrow-minded bigotry aside, has Caitlyn single-handedly raised the profile of trans people?

In a word, no. According to the transgender community, she's part of something far bigger. Jenna Talackova, the Canadian Miss Universe competitor who was initially disqualified from the 2012 competition for being a trans woman, told us: "I don't believe there's just one important transsexual woman in recent history. Each has contributed with their own story."

You don't have to look far to see what she's talking about. Last year, Orange

Is the New Black star Laverne Cox appeared on the cover of Time under the headline The Transgender Tipping Point, and more recently, Kellie Maloney, former coach of boxing legend Lennox Lewis, underwent gender reassignment surgery while the world watched. Caitlyn offers one brave chapter in a larger book, written by each and every member of the LGBT community pursuing equality.

As sexuality expert Dr Jana Funke explained to us: "It's not possible for a single story to change social, cultural and legal attitudes. The coverage of Caitlyn Jenner's transition has certainly brought new attention to trans issues, which is crucial, but I wouldn't go so far as to talk of a key landmark in acceptance."

So if Caitlyn hasn't moved the LGBT community – specifically the T – closer to equality, what has she achieved? Well, she's shone a light on who transsexuals actually are. A YouGov poll found that while 73% of British people felt positive or had no issue with Caitlyn Jenner's Vanity Fair cover, many were simply confused



be secondary. When you have a child, the first person you should think about is that children, because you made them. You brought that child into existence. It's a little bit selfish."

Although some personal views might clash, it's important to appreciate that these conversations are even happening in the first place. Icons like Caitlyn have opened up discussions about the trans community, and it's only a matter of time before words turn into action.

Isn't it time we spoke about the violence and everyday discrimination against the trans community? About how trans people are still banned from joining the US army? Perhaps simply getting more people talking, Caitlyn and others will push us towards a new age of LGBT equality.

However, by chasing conventional female beauty, Caitlyn might also be unintentionally creating an obstacle to acceptance for others. Not everyone can afford years of hormone replacement therapy, breast implants and facial reconstruction surgery. In fact, some parts of Caitlyn's Vanity Fair interview feel a bit out of touch with the ordinary experience of the trans community. "I was always worried," she said to Vanity Fair. "You never wanted to look like a guy in drag, you never wanted to look like a guy in a dress, OK. If you're going to do that, come out, you really have to look the part."

As Alex Sharpe, professor of law and a transgender activist explained to us: "I'm happy for Caitlyn – and the way she chooses to live her life is nobody else's business. But it's important to remember that not all trans people can 'pass' as cisgender [non-trans] or want to do so."

It's this fascination with so-called 'cisnormative' standards of appearance that needs to stop. In order for the LGBT community to achieve acceptance, we must respect Caitlyn Jenner for what she is – a single case of bravery in unique circumstances. What feels right for her might not feel right for others. We should celebrate that there's no set standard for what a trans person may be.

As Thomas Beatie puts it: "It's for you to define normal." ■

The July issue of Vanity Fair is on newsstands now

by what transgenderism involved or what a transsexual actually was. And it's within people's lack of knowledge where the damage is done.

"I think a very harmful stereotype about trans people is that they don't want or shouldn't have children," says Thomas Beatie, a trans male who became widely known as 'The Pregnant Man' after giving birth in 2008.

"Many believe that trans people should be forced to sterilise themselves and undergo costly procedures to live life as

their proper gender. No one should have to undergo any type of surgery to live as his or her true self."

But others have raised questions as to whether people uncomfortable with their gender should have children, pointing towards Caitlyn's six biological kids. One of those people is transgender TV and media personality Lauren Harries.

"I have nothing against Caitlyn Jenner at all," she told us, "I'm really pleased she's happy and beautiful. But until you sort your own gender out, having children should



THE 'GAY BLOOD BAN' – KEEP OR REFORM?

Blood supplies are dwindling, yet gay and bisexual men are told their blood isn't 'safe' enough to be donated. While some are calling for a review of the ban, we ask, is it there with just cause, or is it a dated precaution costing lives?



Ban endangers lives Michael Fabricant

Michael is the Conservative MP for Lichfield.
He tweets at @mike_fabricant.

At a time when there's an acute shortage of blood donors, and demand for whole blood is at an all-time high, a ban on allowing gay men to donate – unless they've been celibate for 12 months – makes little sense, exacerbates the shortage and consequently endangers lives.

The current situation is this – if you're a gay man and you've not been celibate for 12 months or more, you're forbidden from donating blood – even if you've been practising safe sex. By contrast, if you're straight but promiscuous with multiple partners and are practising unsafe sex, you CAN donate blood. This is illogical if not darn right prejudiced.

There is, of course, quite reasonable concerns to ensure that blood supplied by the NHS remains safe; not just from HIV, but hepatitis too. But the incubation period for these diseases is a fraction of 12 months and blood can now be safely screened.

When I've had meetings with Jane Ellison – Minister for Public Health – and her officials, it becomes clear that they're paralysed by caution.

A few months before the General Election, I met with Jane and, while she was sympathetic to the arguments, she seemed unable to persuade her advisors to make any move. However, a commitment was given to see whether research could be conducted into whether the population of gay couples in a civil partnership or marriage are any more infected with HIV or hepatitis than the population as a whole.

But as recently as 9 June, Jane Ellison revealed that the NHS "does not collect data on whether an individual is in a same-sex relationship or a civil partnership as part of the routine surveillance of acute hepatitis B or HIV, nor as part of routine surveillance in blood donors."

The current ban is morally wrong and given, on occasion, we've got to within three days of our blood banks running on empty, the NHS has must see sense and enter the 21st century. ■

We have to keep it Su Brailsford

Su is a NHS Blood and Transplant Consultant in Epidemiology and Health Protection. NHS Blood and Transplant tweets at @NHSBT.

Ensuring that the blood we collect is safe for patients is of paramount importance.

The Department of Health issued new guidelines concerning men who have sex with men in 2011. This followed an evidence based review by independent experts on the Safety Advisory Committee on the Safety of Blood, Tissues and Organs (SaBTO).

Men who have sex with men, but who haven't had oral or anal sex with another man in the last 12 months, can donate blood. Unfortunately, if they have, they can't. This is in line with countries such as Australia and Sweden, who apply a 12 month deferral period. Canada applies a five year period.

We realise that many men who have sex with men support blood donation and feel disappointed that they are unable to donate. None of the criteria are intended to be discriminatory. They're based on statistical risks for sexual behaviour associated with a population group, rather than an individual's sexual history or sexuality. We're sorry for any inadvertent offence this causes.

Safer sex cannot eliminate the risk altogether. Research shows a higher risk of infection in men who have sex with men – although we recognise that the risk can vary between individuals in the group.

There've been great advances in testing which have significantly improved blood safety in the UK. However, if a person donates blood during the 'window period', the infection may not be detected. This means the infection could be transmitted via a blood donation during this period.

We understand that some people would prefer a system that assesses every individual's behaviour, but there's insufficient evidence available to show that this would be either practical or effective.

We'd like to reassure everyone that we're currently able to meet hospital need, although we always need new donors to ensure we can meet the need in the years to come. ■





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WORDS DEAN EASTMOND

GILBERT BAKER [HEROES]

It's Pride season – a time when members of the LGBT community from around the world unite to celebrate the freedoms we have, and the ability to live our lives the way we want. But if there's one thing that unquestionably unites us more than any other, it's the iconic Rainbow Flag. GT celebrates the man and the artist who gave us the gift of this transcendent symbol – Gilbert Baker

"IT'S NOT MY FLAG, IT'S OUR FLAG," Gilbert tells us from his home in New York City. Straight off the bat, he's incredibly humble, with the air of an artist who's satisfied just to have been able to leave his mark on the world. He continues. "What's so amazing about the Rainbow Flag is that we can wrap ourselves in these amazing colours – and that protects us. It's not about the flag, it's about the people who use it."

Gilbert is, in every sense of the term, an unsung hero. Stop people on the street and ask them who created the Rainbow Flag, and we'd wager that the majority would be stumped for an answer. But it was in actual fact Gilbert, in 1978, who brought to life one of the most iconic political symbols and rallying tools in history.

He served in the army from 1970 until 1972, and was stationed in San Francisco at the start of the gay rights movement. After being honourably discharged, Gilbert taught himself how to sew and immediately joined the front line of the equality movement, marching alongside politician and dear friend Harvey Milk.

"I like to sew," Gilbert tells us, with a hint of nostalgia to his voice. "That was always my role as an activist in the early 70s, before my role in the movement progressed. I made flags for years for protests in the streets, which ultimately led to me making the Rainbow Flag – or the Pride Flag – in 1978.

"It was necessary, because we needed a symbol to rally behind. Before that, we only had the Pink Triangle. But the Rainbow Flag is something that transcends language – it's a banner of initiative and fight. The rainbow image is something that's been used for centuries – by Ancient Egyptians and the earliest Chinese. We've just taken it and claimed it for our own visibility, in the sense that we're still fighting for our lives."

The Pink Triangle Gilbert mentions, of course, refers to the badge the Nazis forced suspected homosexuals to wear in the concentration camps. It was a badge we had to share with sex offenders, paedophiles and rapists, who were all branded with the same coloured shape. In time, the Pink Triangle was reclaimed and used as an early symbol of gay pride and social justice, but it wasn't without a dark, ever-reminiscent undertone.

"We needed something about positivity," Gilbert points out. "Our movement is about peace and love and free expression. That was certainly one of the main factors while I was creating the flag. It brought in something positive and a sense of nature."

Growing up in the 60s, Gilbert was surrounded by colour, polka dots and the psychedelic, which he tells us influenced the vibrant nature of our universal symbol. "When I decided to make a flag, I knew exactly what I was doing. I didn't sit down with tens of designs," he begins. "It was there in my head already. It was universal and an obvious choice, you know? I paid attention to other flags. Flags work because they're obvious and political and simple to understand. The rainbow is pretty simple to understand and our message can be conveyed easily, which is important."

Finished and first used in 1978, the Rainbow Flag was born into an era of artistic expression and political development. It took the world by storm in the months that followed, travelling internationally almost overnight to be used as a symbol of liberation in Cuba, China and across most of Europe. The gay rights movement was growing.

We can't imagine the sense of – pun intended – pride Gilbert feels when walking into any gay bar on the planet, or down any gay neighbourhood, and seeing his artwork and his contribution flying

proudly. You can even find it on vodka bottles these days. He cuts in, with his trademark humility again, and a line akin to a masked superhero. "People don't know who I am," he laughs. "This isn't celebrity art, this is political art, so it's not dependant on me. It belongs to everybody. We're all using it as a tool – it's direct art action all over the world, for people to express themselves and make themselves visible.

"But it's pretty cool for me..." he shakes off, casually. Not biggie at all.

With a flag that's been used for 37 years, we can't help but wonder how it's still unfinished. The 64-year-old tells us that it's still a piece of work he's constantly working on – but more so its meaning and interpretation, rather than its physical presence. "It's not about changing or moving the fabric, or the colours, it's about the meaning and interpretations of it that are changing and evolving.

"When I made the Rainbow Flag in 1978, it was a gay liberation flag. The next year in 1979, it was a lesbian liberation flag. And then it became something for bisexuality and transsexuality. It reflects how we've changed and how we're continuing to change – and so I've promised to be part of that, and hear the stories around the world from people about what it means to them, and how they're using it. It makes me happy to see how people have incorporated it into the own lives and communities."

While a lot has changed since 1978, Gilbert makes a point to tell us that "just because we have gay marriage, it doesn't mean we're equal", further adding that "being sanctified by the states doesn't protect us from discrimination." We point out to him that people are fighting for equality in different ways now. He agrees.

"Just because we're not putting a million people on the streets, we're still doing the same," he muses, "the story is easier to convey now. We don't need to march as much anymore. Anger is still so important to express, but advancing power is a lot more than just anger – it's mass knowledge."

And thanks to Gilbert, we have a symbol in which to relay that mass knowledge, for many more decades to come. ■

For more on the Rainbow Flag, Gilbert Baker and his work, visit gilbertbaker.com



One of my earliest
memories that I have
of myself considering

my own sexuality was when Ireland made it legal to be gay. I'm not sure why I remember it so vividly, although it was a relatively big story on that day's evening news. I guess it was because, having just started secondary school, I was beginning to understand that I liked boys, rather than girls. I also have engrained in my memory an episode, five years later, of Channel 4's *Street Mate* – filmed in Dublin featuring a gay guy trying to find love with Davina McCall.

That Ireland, our closest neighbour, only made it legal to be gay in my lifetime seems rather odd. But it makes it all the more spectacular that just 22 years later, the country saw ordinary people come out in their droves to affirm with a simple cross on the ballot paper that love is the same straight or gay, and therefore that the civil institutions must be the same too. To do so in a country where the Catholic church retains a stronghold on social positions, and where divorce has only been

possible since 1997, makes the vote even more remarkable.

Ireland still has a way to go on LGBT rights. Gay couples can still not jointly adopt children, although this is likely to change soon. The country is also going to end its time as the only part of the EU without a Gender Recognition Act, by introducing one of the most progressive systems for trans people to define their gender. The vote though makes the situation in Northern Ireland seem even more out of step with modernity. The country, the only major part of these islands not to have same-sex marriage, is looking increasingly isolated in Northern Europe.

In May, following a case brought by the Northern Irish Human Rights Commission, a Christian-owned bakers was fined £500 for refusing to bake a cake for a gay man that contained a pro-gay marriage slogan. The judge ruled that the bakers suspected him of being gay and discriminated against him on the grounds of his sexual orientation. But while he can now freely buy as many cakes as he wants proclaiming his support

The sad truth is that we shall likely only have true marriage equality across these islands by brave Northern Irish gay couples taking a case to the Supreme Court

@benjamincohen

of same-sex marriage, he can't actually marry. Nor can any gay married couple from the mainland or soon the Republic of Ireland, be recognised as a married couple in Northern Ireland. Marriage means one thing in London, and something very different in Londonderry.

Reacting to the news in the Republic, councillors in Belfast City Council backed same-sex marriage. Unfortunately, their vote has absolutely no bearing on the law. Nor does the fact that by most counts, by a slim majority, same-sex marriage could pass in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Unfortunately, the structure of the Good Friday Agreement, which has brought peace to a once troubled island, means that either side – Republican or Loyalist – has an effective veto to stop a law that they don't want to pass, if they enter what is called a petition of concern. When this is invoked, something the DUP (Democratic Unionist Party) has done on a number of occasions on gay rights, a law must be passed by 60% of the members of the assembly, and 40% of each of the Republican and Loyalist parties. Given that the DUP is both the largest party in Northern Ireland and the largest component of the Loyalists, no law, in particular on same-sex marriage, can pass without its agreement.

The sad truth is that we shall likely only have true marriage equality across these islands by brave Northern Irish gay couples taking a case to the Supreme Court in London or the European Court of Human Rights, arguing that Northern Irish LGBT people are not able to take up the same rights as those in the rest of the UK. A court case will lead to resentment and division so far away from the overwhelming positivity of the vote in the Republic. ■



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OH, DANNY BOY...

Meet Benidorm's boy wonder Danny Walters – he's big, he's buff and he loves pugs. We're sold.

[cover]



WORDS DARREN SCOTT
PHOTOGRAPHY LEIGH KEILY
STYLIST STEPHEN CONWAY
PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANTS ENDIJS ENGELIS &
MEGAN POPELIER
GROOMING DANIEL RYMER AT LOVELYMANAGEMENT
HAIR GROOMED USING GO24.7 AND UNITE
SKIN BY DIOR
THIS PAGE SWIMWEAR BY SPEEDO



THIS PAGE
SHIRT BY ACNE STUDIOS AT MR PORTER

OPPOSITE
SWIMWEAR BY SPEEDO

[cover]



A

s far as location shoots go, Danny Walters is used to a slightly hotter climate. When the actor – who turned 22 just days after GT met him – plays Tiger Dyke in ITV's hit comedy *Benidorm*, the camera's normally capture him in, yep, you guessed it, *Benidorm*.

And while the British weather might be giving us short respites, the Essex boy is definitely at the mercy of a somewhat colder pool than usual. Not that you'd notice – he's delightfully upbeat from the moment we meet in the morning until we hug goodbye in the evening. And that's after we've put him in Speedo's and repeatedly put him back in the water.

GT has caught Danny in his only break between filming the eighth series of *Benidorm*, due back on screens in early 2016. He joined the show in series six and has definitely made a mark...

"I think there's forums online..." he begins, as we discuss how he's caught the eye of certain gentlemen.

"One of my cousins texted me saying 'Type this in online.' I typed in this forum, and there I pop up with my top off and with my hairy chest out, and my own personal photos were up on this forum. I looked at it and I had this realisation thinking, 'Shit, this is real.' But it felt good though, knowing that people follow your work in a way. As long as it makes them happy, that's all I care about..."

And what about the feedback on these forums?

"There's been some guys saying

that they like Tiger hairy, because there's been some pictures of me where I'm quite hairy, some guys say they like me with puppy fat, and I'm like 'I don't get that' – but apparently that's quite nice, because love handles are good. So anyway, I'm trying to get rid of those love handles for now..."

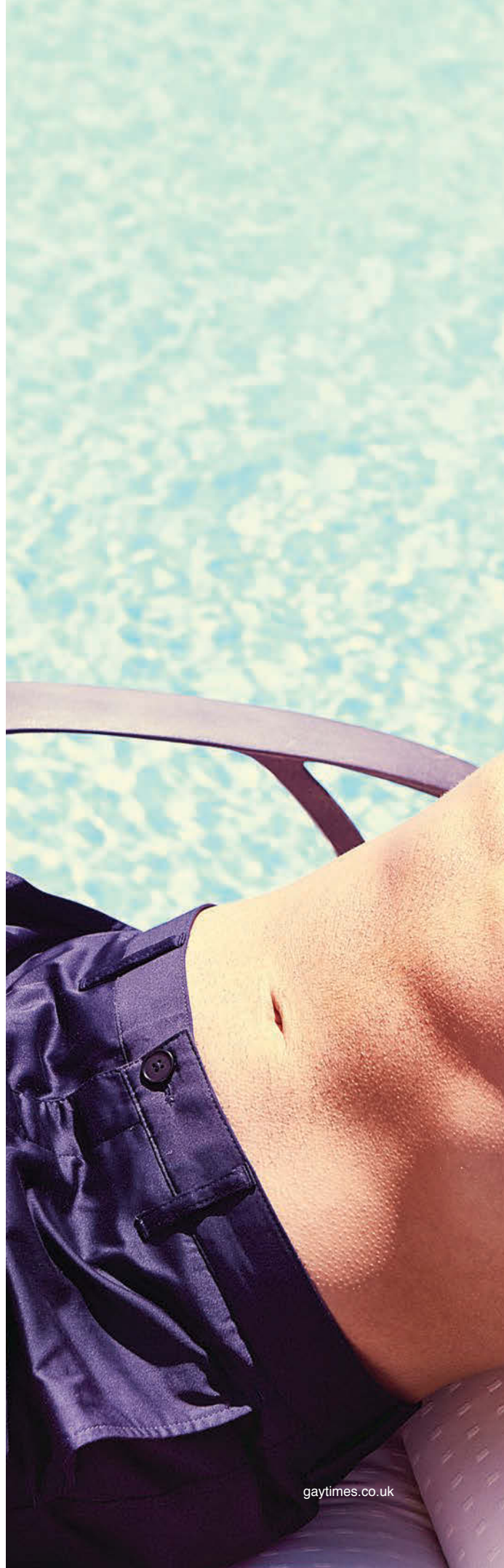
Is there any particular reason he shaves?

"It's literally just for the show, but I keep the hair because it's very manly. I'm like a mini gorilla in a way, but my girlfriend loves it so I can't complain."

Originally he'd planned to be a footballer, but weighing in at almost 17 stone and suffering asthma attacks, his mum suggested drama school. You could say that the rest is history, but Danny hated it at first. "It just wasn't me, but I kept going back just to make my mum happy. To shut her up, really," he grins.

It was his first theatre production, playing – ironically – Fat Sam in *Bugsy Malone*, that got him hooked. "The buzz you get from the audience, when they're clapping, when they're cheering, was one of the best feelings I've ever had in my life, and so ever since then I've loved that feeling, and I started learning the trade. It all became about acting as a child – I was so surrounded by it, I watched so many films, I read so many books. And I loved it ever since, I thought, 'How can I make a career out of that.' So I went to a drama school..."

Theatre, film and TV followed, and then *that* show came up... "When I found out about the *Benidorm* audition, I was really looking forward to it, but I didn't think too much about it because it was such a big job. I thought, 'There's no chance in hell a kid like me from Essex is ever going to get it.' I did about five auditions in the end, and that feeling of getting cast on such a big show changed my life, in a split second. So, I thank everyone in that process of doing that."




[cover]





SWIMWEAR BY D. HEDRAL



Football still plays a part, with Danny playing five-a-side, but he has to be careful things don't get too rough.

"I used to do kickboxing and judo and training to do some cage fighting, but my agent said if I go into an audition with a broken nose, I ain't gonna get a job..."

A combination of bullying, being called 'a fat bastard' by two girls his older brother was chatting up on holiday and a doctor calling his weight 'dangerous' prompted Danny to take action.

"I'm still trying to lose a bit, but it's still hard," he explains. "I started training hard, my diet changed completely and it just shows how strong motivation is, when you can have something to fight for, you can do anything. I started training for

diva! She wasn't a diva at all, she's stereotyped to be a diva, she's just so glamorous, she just oozes celebrity and she comes on set wearing her high heels and just looks fantastic – she just owns the space."

He promises to get a selfie on set with her this year, before talk turns to another GT favourite... Notorious homosexual Beverly Leslie from Will and Grace, aka Leslie Jordan.

"Leslie's great!" Danny beams. "He came up to me," at this he adopts a Southern accent. "'Can I just say, you got some lush lips.' I was like, 'Lush lips?' He was like, 'Hmmm, keep them, they'll come in handy!'" Danny laughs hard. "I was like 'OK, I'll try not to lose them.'"

Things could have gone another way – the actor narrowly missed out on playing Danny

Leslie Jordan came up to me and said, 'Can I just say, you got some lush lips.' I was like, 'Lush lips?' He was like, 'Hmmm, keep them, they'll come in handy!'

six months, and then I started seeing results, and so ever since that day I've not stopped training. I'm still trying to train to look better."

There's a noticeable difference between the teenager who first joined Benidorm and the young man sat wearing not very much in front of us today...

"I must admit, I saw myself on the first series and I thought, 'Wow, in widescreen you look so much bigger.' In that first series of Benidorm I was going out a few times drinking and enjoying the Benidorm life," he grins. "The second year I definitely knuckled down a bit more."

Benidorm, it's safe to say, has attracted quite a lot of camp turns as guest stars. He's quick as a flash to say who his favourite has been.

"Joan Collins," he replies immediately. "She's just such a great

Dyer's son in EastEnders.

"I'm never going to say never to that. I just think it wasn't right at the time, since I had Benidorm. I did the audition with Danny Dyer, and he's very good, he's the sort of guy that I always watched when I was growing up, especially being a cockney, in a way, myself."

Hollywood is, of course, the goal. He mentions Robert De Niro, Tom Hardy and Dustin Hoffman when asked who he'd like to work with. But what type of role would get his attention?

"I'm always fascinated by true stories – people's lives. Everyone has a story, everyone wants it to say something. And so I'm fascinated by people's real lives and true stories. Maybe like James Franco, maybe they should bring that out, because they've done Elvis Presley's life, they've done Johnny





THIS PAGE
SHORTS BY DAVID GANDY FOR AUTOGRAPH AT M&S

OPPOSITE
SHIRT AND TROUSERS BY ORLEBAR BROWN
SUNGLASSES BY CUTLER & GROSS

Cash, they've done a lot of people's autobiographical type of films, and I think they should do a little James Franco, maybe get me to audition for that," he laughs.

Speaking of Mr Franco, and his embracing of gay culture – if we were to ask Danny about a potential man crush...?

"I've got a few, actually, to be honest," he admits. "There are people I think are quite hot, like I can appreciate beauty. There's Bradley Cooper, I'm sure I speak on behalf of a lot of men when I say he is just a good looking guy, he's very cool and very suave. Leonardo DiCaprio, I've always thought he's just clean cut looking, also Hugh Jackman, he's just a pure man, he's got loads of hair and stuff like that – I assume that's what guys like."

There are others in Danny's life with more hair than him and Hugh

Jackman put together though... He's a patron of Pugfest, a UK pug festival that raises money for various charities. So he's quite happy that GT's resident pug, Toby, is on location for the shoot – despite him getting in shot and stealing focus.

"I came across Pugfest on Twitter," he turns to Toby, "look at you, you're so cute... Dogs and pugs and any sort of animals have always just been a massive part of my life. I've grown up loving dogs especially. I'd do anything for a dog. When I found out there's a lot of disowned dogs out there, it really upsets me. How someone can just disown a pet? Pugfest are doing a lot of events, they're a small organisation, a charity, that's just getting bigger and bigger. There's another one coming up in Cardiff soon, I think they're trying to branch out

around the country."

How does he find Twitter?

"You know, I used to hate Twitter, when I first got it, I was like, 'What's the point in this? It's just a few hashtags and crap.' But I'm using it all the time now." He grins and adds: "I've gotten a few naked pictures in the past..."

Turns out the people sending them aren't even doing it with a subtle DM.

"It's sent normally, and then everyone can see. Yeah, I've had a few dick pics sent to me, which was interesting, because I'm flicking through it on the train and it's this massive dick on my screen..."

And then you can't help but mentally compare...

Danny laughs. "Depends how the weather is, today's been quite cold so I'm not even judging!" ■

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Benidorm returns to ITV in 2016, @dannywalters_



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ANT MAN

From Halloween to the hallowed hall of fame that's being in a Marvel movie – GT meets Hollywood's hottest hero Paul Rudd

At GT we like to think big. So naturally our first question to the leading man of Marvel's *other* summer blockbuster, Ant-Man, is... Does size really matter?

Paul Rudd laughs – probably politely, as it's surely not the first and definitely not the last time this question will pop up.

"Well, clearly," he says cheekily, and we know the actor is in good spirits for our chat.

But as much as we're established comic book nerds, this is the superhero movie that maybe people weren't expecting... How big – no pun intended – was he on the mythology of the reformed thief-turned-good-guy with the power to shrink to the size of – you guessed it – an ant?

"Growing up I used to read comics a little bit, but I was never a real superhero kind of kid," Paul admits. "Actually I was really

into English comics, because my parents are British and my aunt and uncle, when they came to visit us once as a kid, my cousin brought a stack of Beano and Dandy, and he left them all with me and I loved them. So my relatives would send me those comics, I got really into those and then a little bit of Archie and Veronica, more of the kind of funny comics, I'd say, than the superhero stuff. Although I did have some of the superhero stuff."

He's joining an elite crew of actors in Marvel's Cinematic Universe – which of the others caught his eye growing up?

"Of the superhero ones, pretty standard ones. Hulk, I liked, Spider-Man... I had some weird ones. I remember once there was about five minutes there were I was like, 'I'm going to try and get into comic book collecting,' and I was finding characters that people

didn't know about, or weren't standard. But I didn't know about Ant-Man," he laughs. "That one escaped me."

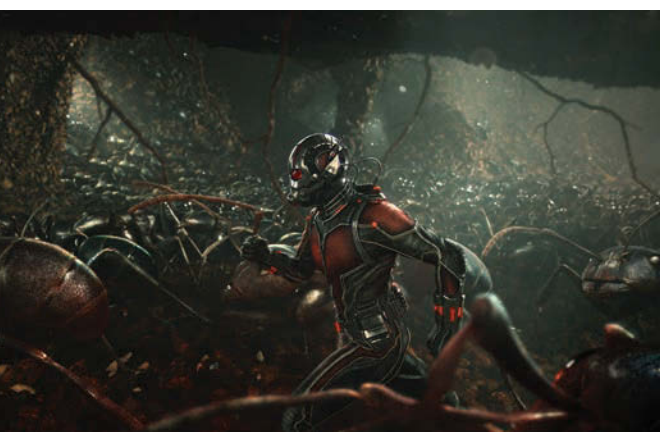
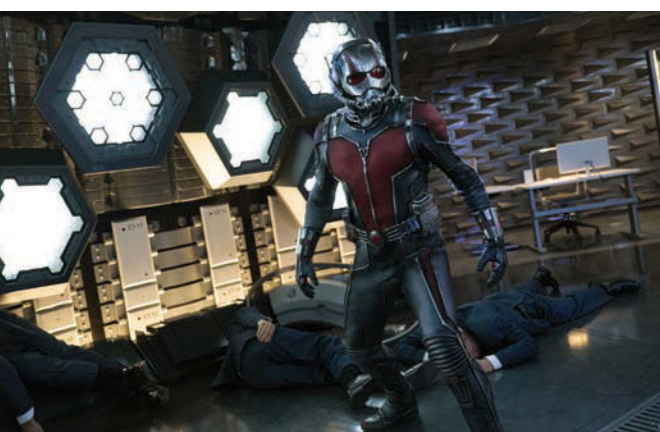
Presumably he's fully up to speed on Scott Lang and his heroic alter-ego since?

"I am now!" he chuckles.

And of course, in the film, he has the now obligatory Marvel shirtless scene, how did he get into shape for that?

"I kinda took the Chris Pratt approach, which was, cut out anything that's really fun for about a year," he laughs, "I didn't drink and I didn't eat french fries, I had a very strict regiment, as far as eating and what I was eating, and I was working out a lot with a trainer. I would do cardio work on my own and then I also worked with another guy, worked on gymnastics, tumbling, parkour training. Just that kind of stuff to get

WORDS DARREN SCOTT



the physicality and some of the stuff that was required for the role, to make it look like I kind of somewhat knew what I was doing. But I would say that for really the better part of a year, fitness and diet became the number one focus of the day."

We remind him that focus doesn't look likely to let up, because it's just been announced that Ant-Man will be appearing in the third Captain America movie, Civil War. No fries for Mr Rudd.

Paul laughs. "That's right. Well, I'm going back to do a little stuff on Captain America 3 so, I gotta get back into the suit, I can't really let myself go. I've signed myself up for kale salad for the next several years possibly," he jokes.

Is kale salad enough to hold your own pectorally against the likes of Thor and Daredevil? Marvel seem to be ramping the stakes up...

"I really kind of lucked out because it's Ant-Man, and he's small, so there's no way I can get as muscular as Thor. By the way, I don't think anybody can, or Hulk. For me it seemed like, alright, lets focus more on lean. And some working out and lifting weights and that kind of thing, but it wasn't about, you know, I wasn't looking to go full Jackman on this one..."

As much as we're excited about Ant-Man, of course we're going to try and find out about the future. Paul's got the measure of us, of course.

"Am I allowed to talk about Captain America 3? I mean, probably not, you know how they get about all this stuff..." he begins and the watchful eye of Marvel's parent company Walt Disney steps in as the movie publicist jokingly cries out "No! The answer's no!"

Paul deadpans: "...all of a sudden a blow dart will shoot out right into my neck and I'm going to crumple and I won't know where it came from. I can tell you that I'm in it, I can tell you that."

We're not giving in that easily! There's rumours of another insect

superhero coming along in Civil War... How does Paul feel about possibly starring alongside Spider-Man?

"Well," he begins to say 'we'll see' but stops himself. "It would be really cool if it happens, but I don't know if it's gonna happen. I wish I knew! I don't even have a sense of what the story might be, this is some high, secretive stuff. I have to show up to an undisclosed location and then say my lines and then they're sending me back to New York."

Foiled again. Another tactic perhaps – in that with the Marvel Cinematic Universe timeline at the moment, there seems to be a bit of a master plan. Does he have any idea where things might be heading for Ant-Man?

"You know, I have some ideas, but nothing that has ever been confirmed, and nothing that I've ever asked of Kevin Feige [producer]. I kind of go into this thinking, as soon as I need to know something, they're going to tell me. I did know about Captain America 3 for a while, but beyond that would all just be kind of guessing on my end, but I have a feeling," he takes a noticeable pause before answering, "it won't be the last you see of this character. That said, Ant-Man hasn't even come out yet, so who knows? I might be talking out of my ass, I don't know."

His Clueless co-stars were all immortalised as dolls, and now after countless movies the 46-year-old will finally be an action figure. As ever, there's a bit of a recurring theme with actors and merchandise...

"Well the coolest thing of all, for me, is that I think I might be in a Lego set. That knocks me out more than anything, that there might be a Lego figure of me."

We've had several male Hollywood stars professing their love for the plastic bricks recently. What gives?

"I used to play with it a lot as





a kid, I've got kids of my own, they were way into Lego. There's just something worldwide and timeless about Lego. I've thought actually for many years, that Lego might be the best toy. In the same way that I think chess might be the best game, I think Lego might be the best toy."

The big question is – has he seen his mini-me yet?

"No!" he laughs. "I haven't seen any of it yet, I've just heard that there's going to be some. So hopefully those rumours are true, otherwise this whole interview is going to sound terrible."

Superheroes, comic books – we're here to tell Paul, if he didn't know already, that they've got a big gay fan base. Not unlike, we'd argue, Paul himself. He doesn't

know why, understandably, but cites *Clueless* and *The Object of My Affection* as two possible avenues.

"I'm very vocal of my love of gay culture, and gay men and women, and how funny and smart and awesome so many of my gay friends are. And maybe that's apparent, I don't know. That's true, absolutely, I just love..." he trails off. "How do I finish that sentence?" he laughs.

'Gays', we reply.

"I do! I do. I love gays..." he beams.

Talk of his work in comedy brings us to *Friends* and his role as Mike Hannigan, husband to Phoebe. But then, a reunion must be something he's often asked about...

"I don't get asked on it, no never," he says. "And if there was, I still kind of consider myself more of a prop on that show than anything else, it was really about them, I only came into the show at the tail end. I wasn't even cousin Oliver to *The Brady Bunch*, I was a footnote on that thing, so nobody is going to ask me about a reunion, and if there was one, I wouldn't expect... I'm not trying to downplay it or anything, maybe I'd be in there for a scene if they want you to find out what happened to Phoebe, but nobody's ever asked me about it."

There's a fan base crying out to find out what happened to Phoebe. Someone's going to ask eventually... But a fan base is something Paul's going to have to contend with, being the latest Marvel hero. Is fandom something he's experienced before, say, perhaps for being a male scream queen in *Halloween 6: The Curse of Michael Myers*...?

"No, I feel like that one slipped through the cracks for most people," he laughs. "That was my very first movie, I hold that one in a very special place in my heart. It was a bit of a hot mess that one though wasn't it? Really? I mean,

with the rune stones and things, it was a little all over the place."

As horror fans – and particularly of *Halloween* – we confess that we actually thought it was great...

"There was a real honour in playing Tommy Doyle. In *Halloween*-lore he's an important figure, so I certainly recognised that. And I got to work with Donald Pleasence, which was a real thrill for sure, I couldn't believe I was working on a movie but I was getting to work with him and ask him about Harold Pinter!"

Is that the movie that forever secures his convention status?

"Never! I've never been asked once – and I even heard they did a retrospective DVD where there was commentary, but I'm not on it! But I'm not on it because I was never even asked. No one's ever approached me about any of that stuff, I'm certainly not averse to it, I know it has its fan base out there, but no one's ever talked to me about it. I'm too busy touring the world on my *Dinner for Schmucks* convention," he jokes.

Is he ready to be known for the rest of his life as Ant-Man? Superhero movies have a way of sticking with actors, after all.

He laughs. "Well, we'll see..." he says humbly, but we're not having any of it.

"No! We'll see how it all plays out, nobody can predict the future, hopefully this won't be the one that just doesn't work," he laughs loudly. "I don't think it will be, I think it'll work. I haven't seen it yet but I'm really excited about it, and I think it's going to surprise some people, in just how cool and badass it is. Maybe it won't surprise you, maybe people already know it's going to be cool and badass. But if I'm always associated with this guy or this part, I'd be very happy with that, it's a cool part and cool role to be associated with." ■

Ant-Man is in cinemas from 17 July, @antman

A photograph of two people from the waist down, standing side-by-side with their hands in their pockets. The person on the left is wearing a white t-shirt and blue jeans with a brown belt. The person on the right is wearing a black t-shirt and blue jeans. The background is plain white.

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RuPaul's Drag Race has just finished airing its seventh season. An impressive feat. Having gained intense popularity, this year's queens were tweeted, gif'd and talked about like never before. Our winner? Violet Chachki. A burlesque beauty and corseted queen with a cinched-in waist and couture looks to die for. Plus, she made it through the competition without having to lip sync for her life once... We speak with Violet in the wake of her crowning, and ahead of her brilliant new single Bettie – with music impressively written by Tommy Lee – to get to know America's next drag superstar a little bit better

"The single's really representative of the album, actually," she says.

"It's really dark. It's really dancey, it's super sexy and it's fun. I kinda wanted to create a soundtrack to the visual work that I do on stage or in videos. I really look up to RuPaul. She has everything you could think of. All of her merchandise, her character and soundtrack to all of it. I want that for myself. To present a total package to people."

And the title of her album?
Gagged. But when did Violet last find herself gagged by something?

"Well I definitely field-tested my jawbreaker gags." A product available in her online shop. "I field-test those quite often actually, because I have them laying around my house. That was definitely the last time I was physically gagged. The last time I was emotionally, mentally and verbally gagged was seeing Caitlyn Jenner's cover. I was literally gagged. I was gagging. I was GAG-GING – and that's the best way to describe it. It's kinda brilliant that's what my EP is called. When I won Drag

Race, for the better half of the day, I just couldn't shut up about Caitlyn Jenner. I was gagging."

In the immediacy of her crowning, Violet expressed that, in her role as America's next drag superstar, she wants to be an advocate for LGBT youth and transgender people. She goes into detail. Lots of detail. "Yeah, I mean, especially with youth – and I'm obviously very young – I've experienced a lot of what people go through with coming into my own, being confident and proud of who you are. Luckily, I was brought up

COME THROUGH, VIOLET CHACHKI!

WORDS HARRY CLAYTON-WRIGHT





with a somewhat supportive family and in an area where I could express all that and explore my identity and do all those things in a safe space.

"I was really fortunate – and I know there are other people out there who weren't as fortunate as I am. I read their messages when they send them to me. I read their stories. I stay very current on queer politics and queer issues. I never really understood why the trans community and the rest of the LGBT community have this disconnect at times. It really saddens me that that's the case.

"I have a lot of trans friends, a lot of genderqueer friends, gender neutral friends and I hate to see separation like that. There's no need. It's counterproductive and it really saddens me when I see queer people fighting within our own community. We've so much going against us already. We need to stand together – and I'm trying to at least bring SOME people together. Some people you just can't, there's no changing. When I came out to myself, I probably said it out loud for the first time – I wanna say at 12-years-old – and then I

came out to my friends the following year or two, so probably like 13, 14, something like that. Then I know I came out to my mum, my junior year of high school, so I was 17 then.

"A lot of my childhood was trying to normalise myself to my parents. I feel like they never felt they had a normal child and they were always kinda pushing me to be more normal and fit in with gender norms. I went to Catholic school, so there was also this added religious element, and there was also this added gender-specific element, because in Catholic school there are uniforms, obviously, and guidelines as far as accessories, physical guidelines, costume guidelines, that you have to follow that are REALLY gender specific.

"I think I was always really trying to normalise to my parents and really forcing them to accept me. My journey was kind of basically telling my parents to fuck off. This is who I am and you're gonna have to accept it, or I'm gonna leave. I did actually run away at a young age for a couple months and my parents came around. My experience was really forcing my parents to accept who I am, instead of telling them or asking them."

Is Violet close with her family now? "We're definitely getting closer as the days go on," she tells us.

"RuPaul has helped normalise my life to them so much. They were so proud, they came to the finale taping and they were sitting behind Miley Cyrus – and Miley's talking about how she's been rooting for me and she loves me and for my parents, it just normalises things for them.

"They were brought up in a different time and this was not normal back then. This was very taboo and I think it's just about educating. You have to educate the people that raised you. It's a crazy time to think about that. You have to turn around and help your parents and help them grow.

"The show has really helped do

that for them, so we're getting a lot closer because I'm able to be comfortable. I'm able to be myself around them and talk about my career and talk about what I'm doing now, and everything that's happening in my life. I don't feel like it's going to be an awkward conversation, because now everything is on national television. The show is so important because it helps normalise this community and brings visibility to all queer people."

Making the show looks incredibly intense and exhausting. And as our new queen, Violet isn't pulling any punches when she reflects on her time on the show.

"Filming Drag Race is miserable," she deadpans. "I'm just gonna go ahead and say it, I already won, I might as well just go ahead and tell you. It's awful. You can tell! Especially the first half of the season, I'm not having a good

time." She laughs. "I'm not having fun! It's not fun at all. You get on the plane, then every person you interact with from then on, you don't know. They don't know you, you don't know them, you have no one to talk to. Your phone's been taken, your wallet's been taken, you aren't allowed to look out your window, your eyehole on your door is shut, you're locked in your rooms at night, there's people guarding the hallways. It's insane! You're filming for 12, 13, 14 hour days. You go back to your hotel room and you just pass out. It doesn't even matter that you're locked in, because all you wanna do is sleep.

"It's miserable, it's demanding and you have no one to talk to – and that's why you become close with these girls. When the cameras are on, that's your only opportunity to talk to anyone and that's why you become so close, because you're





literally going insane.

"It's the most mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually, creative, draining experience I've ever been through. But it's also the most rewarding. I grew so much in those two months that we were filming. Watching it and working professionally now with these people, it's so rewarding, but it was miserable to film. My body will not let me emotionally tell a lie. If I'm having a good time, you'll know. I have so much resting bitch face the whole season. I really wasn't having a good time – and it's the truth."

Before we end our chat, a lyric in Violet's song Bettie suggests that the title character needs a spank. Also, we know that Chachki once worked at a sex dungeon "like two or three times", so we have to ask, does she have a favourite fetish?

"I'd definitely say that I'm a fan of spanking," she tells us, cool as a cucumber and straight off the bat. "I wouldn't have written a song about it otherwise! I've mostly, professionally, worked with forced-feminisation. So I basically work under a dominatrix making one of her submissive guys into a woman, so it was really good preparation for the makeover challenge, actually."

"I'd makeover these 300lb businessmen to humiliate them as a form of gender confusion – it's like role reversal. These butch masculine men would come into the dungeon and they would want to become so submissive. That's one that I've worked with most and I really enjoy. That's one that's been the most rewarding, because these guys get to feel something different. And they enjoy it."

We draw our conversation to a close and congratulate Miss Chachki once more. We're still blushing. She said she thought we were handsome. Swoon. ■

Gagged is out now, facebook.com/violetochachki, [@violetochachki](https://twitter.com/violetochachki)



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PAUL O'GRADY

He went from the queen of the stage to the king of TV talk shows, and recently paid tribute to his late friend Bob Monkhouse. Now, Paul O'Grady tells GT why Lily Savage is never coming back, why Katie Hopkins will never be on his show, and how he gets by with a little help from his friends...

WORDS ANDREW WILLIAMS

Why did you want to do your show about Bob Monkhouse? I'd worked with him quite a bit and was keen to do it – it was like doing something for a friend. I just present and lots of people talk about what it was like to work with him. I did his 70th birthday show for the BBC, his Christmas show, I did his last Lottery show and we presented a BAFTA together. Lily Savage and Bob Monkhouse were an odd couple and that's how he liked it. He encouraged new comedians.

He was a prolific joke writer – did you write loads of material when you were doing Lily Savage?

I didn't realise people wrote jokes down like that – he had books full of jokes. I thought it was something you had to be ashamed of and that you were supposed to have it all in your head or ad-lib it. I was at Edinburgh one year and Hattie Hayridge slapped her joke book down next to me. I thought 'She's bold' and I took mine out. It was a revelation that everyone did it.

Did you write a lot of jokes down?

I did, but then I'd forget them on the night! I'd have the basic act just to stop me panicking and I'd go on and talk to the audience and go from one thing to another. I'd never do the whole act until I started doing theatres – then I had a set piece for an hour that I could veer off if I wanted to. But in the early days, I'd just go out there and go into a rant. It was an endless well. Or I'd talk about Lily's fictional relatives. I had endless possibilities.

Do you miss doing stand up?

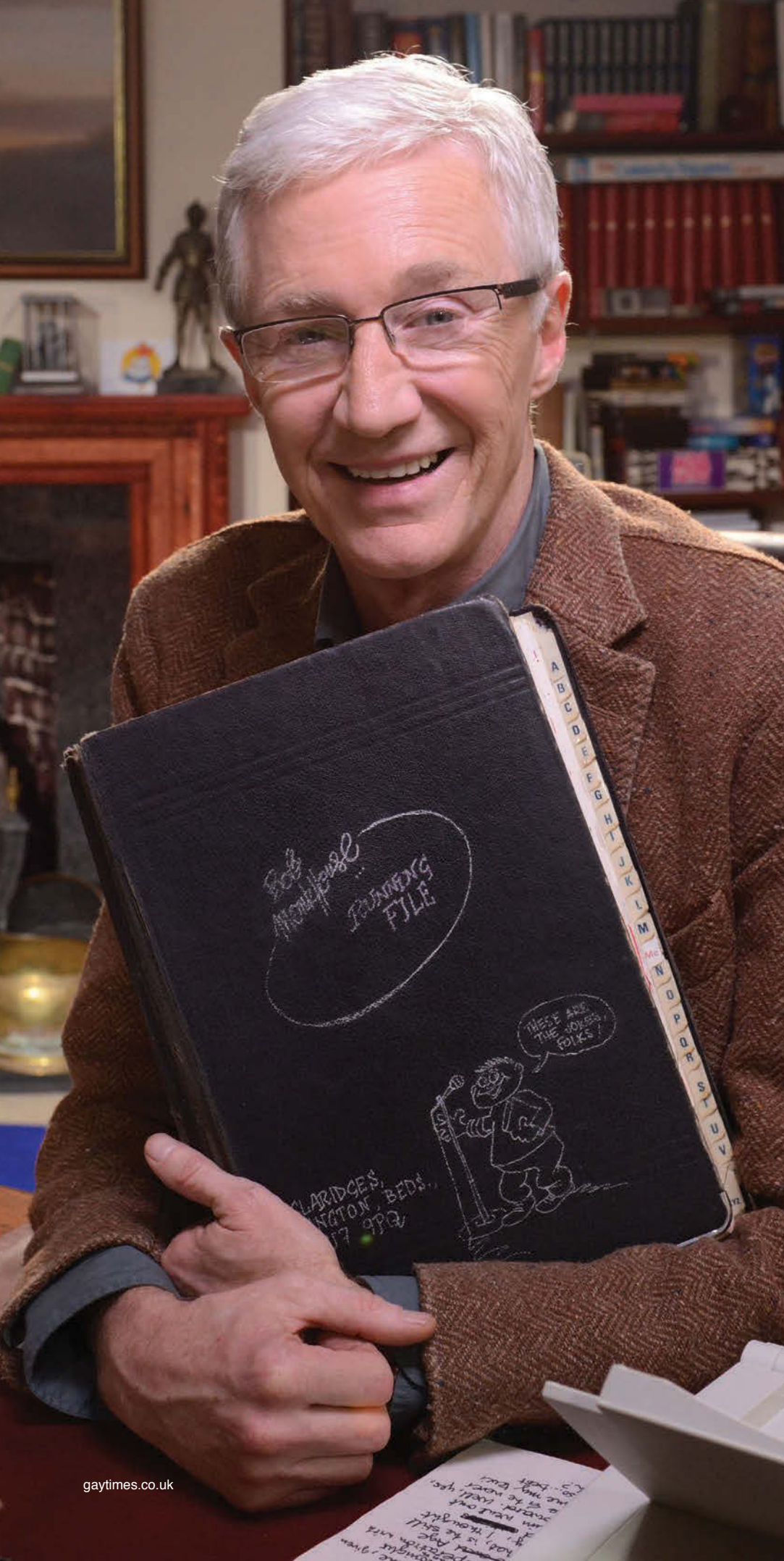
I do sometimes. It's a hard task to master because you've got to endlessly come up with new stuff. No one says, 'Hooray I've got to write new material' – it's homework. You've got to think up gags. Some come spontaneously if something's happened that day, but more often that not you sit there going through the papers looking for inspiration. I was lucky with Lily – I could invent a new man in her life or go on about

her getting raided by the police again. With characters you can say what you like within reason. Barry Humphries was saying the same about Dame Edna.

What would lure you back? I'd never do Lily again. I'm 60 and don't want to be rattling around in a mini skirt. It's undignified. I did the Hampstead Drama and Literary Festival, I was supposed to be talking about the process of writing a book and never mentioned it once – it all just came out. But if you said, 'Do you want to do an hour at the Apollo' – I'd head for the hills.

Do you have any hidden talents? I can breathe fire. It used to kill ten minutes in the act. Now you couldn't do it because of health and safety. You've got nylon eye lashes on, a nylon wig – it's highly dangerous, you have to know what you're doing. Lots of acts did it. There was an act up north, Vicky Graham, who did a 'blow out' and someone opened the pub door and the 'blow out' came





straight back at him and everything melted – the wig, the eyelashes, he had third degree burns. He was out of hospital two weeks later and back on the circuit. Drag queens are hard as nails.

When was the last time you did that? On the chat show last year. I taught McFly how to fire eat. They were on the show and Danny asked if I could do it, I said yes, Barbara Knox from Corrie was there and told me to teach them. The next time they were on we had a professional fire eater in. My feathers were well and truly ruffled. He had tiny little flames, I did mine like Vesuvius and held the rod in my teeth – showing off, incensed at this new comer – and McFly were saying, 'We could never do that!'

Who would be your ideal guest on the show? They're all dead. I did Barbra Streisand but she's a bit scary when you first meet her. She directs all the lighting. I had my dog Buster with me and she had her little white poodle Sadie and as we were talking, I glanced down and saw Buster doing what dogs do – I tried to kick him off Sadie and Barbra glanced down and said, 'Oh my God, she's such a slut.' We ended up getting on great. I bought her a load of eggs and strawberries from home and she was over the moon with them. When we had Bette Midler on, her manager said 'Barbra sends her love.' I said I was seeing her on Tuesday. I thought he meant Barbara Windsor, he said 'No, Streisand.' I dined out on that because I've always liked her.

Have you made friends with anyone you've had on the show? Celia Imrie became a really good friend, Linda Henry and Scott Maslan from EastEnders... Loads of people. Some of them I've known for years and you don't see them for a while and pick up where you've left off. It's great.

Is there anyone you wouldn't have on the show – Katie Hopkins, for instance? We only have celebrities on the show so she wouldn't be in

the equation to begin with. She's so vitriolic. Somewhere along the line she's been severely bullied and she's decided now's the time for revenge. Something's gone off because that behaviour isn't normal. What she said about the people in the Mediterranean – that's fascism she's coming out with.

Who're your favourite guests? I'm lucky with guests and have ended up making friends with a lot of them. Lady Gaga's great fun. She came on the tea time show before she was really famous. She was playing the piano in rehearsal and I said, 'You should sing the blues', and she started doing it. She's so off the wall. I love her.

How are your owls? It's like Hogwarts. I've got five. I can't release them into the wild because they were raised in captivity and don't know how to hunt. I started

getting them because one needed rescuing – it was being kept in a wardrobe in Birmingham and then someone else said, 'I've got a male who's looking for a home.'

We built them a big aviary, they've got loads of space. Barn owls don't live long in the wild – they fly into lorries, they're endangered. I got my first owl five years ago. They're all named after Greek mythology – Minerva, Icarus, Pollux and Castor – apart from the latest, Diablo.

You have lots of animals – do you have a least favourite? No, I love them all! When you're up first thing falling over something unsavoury in a field you get a bit fed up, but I love the animals. I've got six pigs, nine sheep – one of them is 15 – four goats, five owls, five dogs – one with a personality disorder. He's called Eddie – he's a Chihuahua, Jack Russell cross. He's very loyal but a

“

We only have celebs on the show, so Katie Hopkins wouldn't be in the equation to begin with

”

real tyrant. I got him doing the TV show about Battersea Dogs Home. I got through the series then right at the end I saw him, asked if he had a home and said he was coming home with me. It's got to stop.

Do you collect memorabilia?

Yes. I've got Gypsy Rose Lee's travelling trunk. I got it from her son. I did a documentary about her and made friends with him – he's Erik Lee Preminger – he's Otto Preminger's son. And I've got Basil Rathbone's alarm clock, Bette Davies' beads, Fats Waller's cufflinks, which I gave to Gaga.

Do you keep your own memorabilia?

Not scrapbooks or anything like that. Marlene Dietrich said only a fool keeps her own publicity – and she was right. I've got enough junk. All the costumes are in storage. You get letters saying, 'Can we have one of your old frocks for a bingo raffle prize please?' You think, 'Sure, I'll send a £5,000 dress down for you to flog off for £2.'

Will you be doing an exhibition?

There was one in Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery called Savage Style. It amazed me because I used to go there as a kid. There was Lily's old zebra mini skirt and thigh length boots in a glass case. I felt like I'd died. Is it flattering to be called a museum piece? It did really well, surprisingly, and some of the outfits looked beautiful – all the wicked queen panto dresses, which are all beaded to death. You can't get them made like that anymore, all hand finished. I don't know what I'm going to do with them, but I've got them all in storage. Too many memories and they're too expensive, but I'm certainly not going to flog them so some old tranny can stomp around a pub in them. ■

Watch past episodes of The Paul O'Grady Show on ITV Player, Paul's tribute to Bob Monkhouse – The Million Joke Man – aired on Gold, goldtv.co.uk, paulogradyshow



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POSITIVE TALK

They're three letters that have changed the face of our community – HIV. It's cost us the lives of thousands upon thousands of loved ones, and the fight to find a cure is something that's still raging on. And yet still, the new diagnosis rate is at its highest since records began. Isn't it about time we started doing something to face this epidemic head on?

WORDS WILLIAM CONNOLLY
IMAGES JAMES BURTON
GROOMING LUKE STEPHENS WITH JADE DAVISON USING NEAL'S YARD
OPPOSITE PAGE
ACTORS DAVID POYNOR AND STEVEN WEBB



Theatre director Andrew Keates thinks so, which is why he's putting on a new production of the critically acclaimed and iconic play *As Is* – dubbed as 'the first AIDS play'. Andrew oversaw the production of the play a couple of years back, with the hope that it would encourage people to go out, get tested and discover their status. He just never anticipated that it would be he himself who'd find out he was HIV-positive. This time around, he's bringing *As Is* to the West End, in a completely immersive evening of entertainment, featuring lectures and Q&As with prominent people living with HIV, as well as immediate HIV testing from Dean Street Express.

He's assembled one hell of a cast, too, including Giles Cooper from the blockbuster film *Pride*, Steven Webb from *The Inbetweeners*, David Poynor of *Peter Pan* fame, and Dino Fetscher, who was last on our screens in Russell T Davies' *Cucumber* and *Banana*. Throw in Bevan Celestine and Russell Morton, and you've got an all-star troupe set to tell this heartwarming story of love and acceptance to a new generation of theatre-goers.

The show is running now at London's Trafalgar Studios, and we spoke to director Andrew about his own positive experiences in bringing this classic play to life and ask – is this the year we stand together and accept one another, as is?

When did this piece first come about? It was the very first AIDS play that was created as an immediate response to the epidemic happening in the 80s. Written by William M Hoffman, who was essentially watching all his friends and colleagues die around

him. It was a terrible time.

A play with a history steeped in truth, then? Without question, yes. That's what I think makes this play quite so special in that it's in no way preaching. It's true and deeply honest throughout.

It also has a personal link for you as well... When I first worked on this play a few years ago now, I told the cast I wanted to do this play for three reasons. Firstly, it's a beautiful play. There's nothing more beautiful than turning to another person and telling them you accept them as is. Secondly, we've forgotten the incredible people we've lost to HIV and AIDS. And lastly, if one person saw the play and got tested and were positive, they could seek the appropriate treatment they needed. I just never thought, on the last day of putting on the play the last time around, that I'd be the person who would find out they were HIV-positive. I can literally say this play has changed my life.

For such a difficult subject, it must place the pressure on you as the director? Oh, without question. This is a risky production because it's going to ask audiences about their knowledge of HIV and AIDS, but also about judgement and acceptance. This is almost a response at honouring everybody that we lost in the 80s, but providing a platform for us to all learn today.

***As Is* teaches this generation the stories of the past, then?** The play starts in a scenario that all gay men have been in, which is a break up. They aren't perfect characters. They're bitchy and funny and passionate and just like an ordinary everyday couple that you'd see today. The only difference is that they're in the early 80s and there's this thing called AIDS.

And this is set to challenge audience perceptions? I really hope so. With most AIDS or HIV dramas, most people are ignorant

to them because most people don't tend to seek them out. Really because, if we hold the mirror up to ourselves and our own ignorance, it's a subject that we can sometimes feel uncomfortable about.

Do you think the gay community are the biggest supporters for those that are positive? Not at all, which is just really sad. It just doesn't seem very loving anymore. Now, in modern society, if we hear the word HIV or AIDS, often the first thing that people do is they feel disabled to love someone with HIV, because they don't want to catch it. The stigma surrounds HIV in the same way as other sexual diseases.

Where do you think this stigma comes from? What people aren't learning is that HIV-positive men on treatment aren't passing the virus on, because they can't. It just seems like you see people with HIV as a stigma and in the 80s it may have killed people, which we should never forget, but people still helped and reached out. People were fighting for their lives, but now AIDS and HIV won't kill a gay man today, but the stigma, and the community around it will – and it can give someone a living hell, too.

Did you experience this after finding out your status? When I was diagnosed, the first thing that I thought was that I was going to be a campaigner for the cause, but also, I thought it would cut off any jobs in the theatre going forward. I certainly discounted the idea of ever being in love or even being loved back. I thought that virus is just too big a deal for anyone to accept. I've been in bars and seen people on a date or heard the jokes. The gay community is supposed to unite and support those involved and be all accepting in this diverse community. When, actually, it's extremely misogynistic, extremely racist and ultimately what so many gay men are doing is pointing





ACTORS DINO FETSCHER AND BEVAN CELESTINE

towards people who have been diagnosed with HIV and saying 'beware'.

Are most people that have HIV aware of their status? Every day, at least five people in London are diagnosed with HIV. These statistics are getting bigger and bigger and the reason for that is there's no education.

With *As Is*, you're also giving audiences the chance to ask questions... The piece itself is only 70 minutes long, without an interval. The lovely thing is then after, there'll be a whole series of Q&A's, debates and educational workshops that'll last about 35 minutes. It gives audiences the chance to learn and discuss the piece and maybe a few of their own issues or concerns – and get a response instantly. As part of that, there'll also be rapid HIV testing sets, done on site at the theatre.

What would you like audiences to take away from the show? To not judge anyone based on their status. The most beautiful thing that you can do in this world is love and be loved by someone that takes you as you are. It's so easy to pass judgement on anybody with any form of disease or handicap or disability. We're dealing with a time where thousands of us are dying and we were there for each other, and I don't know if this is still the case today. I think it's easier to run away from someone with HIV than to consider loving them. This might be a serious piece of theatre, but you can also enjoy it as well. It's not a tough drama, but one that reflects reality and and teaches you about the past and will hopefully change the future. This show can change someone's life for the better. And that is why it's so important and relevant today. It can change a life. ■

As Is is now open at London's Trafalgar Studios (Studio 2) until 1 August, atgtickets.com/trafalgarstudios, @asisplay, @andrewkeates



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RED ALERT!

WORDS DARREN SCOTT IMAGE NINO MUÑOZ / NETFLIX

Never mind commanding the bridge on USS Voyager or the galley in Litchfield Penitentiary – Kate Mulgrew’s greatest journey is her own. Engage!

When GT gets on the phone to Kate Mulgrew’s New York home, there’s possibly only one thing more exciting than hearing the familiar tones of our favourite Starfleet captain.

“I was just reading the first episode script when you called and I’m delighted to return,” she says, confirming her appearance as Galina ‘Red’ Reznikov in the fourth series of *Orange Is the New Black*. There may’ve been a squeal on our end of the line, followed by laughter on hers. But we’re time-travelling slightly, with not a wormhole in sight. We’re actually here to talk

about series three of Netflix’s incredibly popular women’s prison drama – which you’ve probably binge-watched already and seen Red finally returned to her beloved kitchen. “But the unexpected awaits as it always does at the pen of Jenji Kohan, who is brilliant. So, just when you think you’re on top, something slips. There’ll be a trap door effect. But I’m not going to give you spoilers because we were warned that we’d be beheaded if we do that,” she jokes.

And of the fourth series, which is filming right now? “I hope that there’s going to be a few more seasons. It’s going to be quite interesting I think this year, the sky’s the limit and Jenji is feeling, I think, that she can use her witchcraft in any which way she likes, so there’ll be the introduction of new characters, I’m sure that comes as no surprise. And those of us who are of the ‘old guard’ will have to fight, I think, in new and quite unorthodox ways to protect our respective positions.”

Filming the series near her New York residence works perfectly for the actress.

“It’s terrific because they just pick me up and I go right out to the studio in Queens. It has that flavour, it has that stamp on it that this is a New York production. These actresses have been culled from the very bowels of New York and it shows. These are not faces that are Hollywood faces are they? Nor types that are Hollywood types, they’re endemic to New York, the seasoning of New York, the hardships of New York and the flavours.”

There’s also a certain something about women in prison dramas that resonates particularly strongly with a gay male audience.

“Why?” she asks immediately. “You tell me, because I’m not a gay man.”

We tell her that she’s just ruining it, saying things like that and she howls with laughter. “Oh, I hate to let you down, but why is it? I know that that’s true, but nobody’s ever really articulated why...”





Metaphorically pulling up our sleeves, we suggest that it might be because there's something empowering about seeing strong female characters in the lead.

"Empowering because that's how you'd like to view women in an ideal world? Or how you view the women who shaped your life?" As afternoon conversations go, being analysed by one of the strongest female actors of our time is 'up there'.

"It's a curious thing for me, I think it's very true, but I think the same could be said of almost any demographic, certainly young women are drawn to this in an unexpected and quite a passionate fervour, because they too would say, just as you've said, 'We get to watch women at the height of their skills

force a circle into a square, because we're in this monochromatic, very bleak environment called a women's prison, and even though it's a minimum security facility, the feeling is one of constant peril, so everybody has to find their way, and everybody does. This is, of course, riveting."

She admits she hasn't seen other recent prison dramas such as *Wentworth* or *Bad Girls*.

"I should though, I love prison stuff just like everybody else. When I was a little girl, I was addicted to a terrible show called *Women Behind Bars*, I'd go everywhere to find it and see it and my mother used to say, 'Kate Mulgrew, what is wrong with you?' She laughs. "I'd say, 'It's so good mom, they're behind bars, they're going to kill each other'.

literary accomplishment and I think that my voice, in the book, is strong and clear, because the story has been written in my mind, scored on my heart low these many years – and out it came. And I faced the writing with a real discipline and austerity. I wasn't interested in writing anything less than a story of honesty, literary merit and significance. And if I accomplished that, then I did what I set out to do. I wanted to write it well, I really wanted to write it well. And they tell me that I have," she chuckles.

She has indeed, producing a book that genuinely falls into the 'can't put down' category. She takes the compliment humbly, as a dignified person would, and while we're somewhat pleading for a follow-up, she quickly says that there'll be more, though perhaps not in a linear fashion. "It's all still forming in my mind, but there will be another book."

We note that *Star Trek: Voyager* forms only a few chapters – does she think there's more to be said on her role as the first female captain?

"I think for the moment I would leave it alone, it may percolate again, in my imagination and in my mind, because I'll tell you without hesitation that those seven years were very defining – but there was a considerable amount of darkness in those seven years. Offset, of course, by the light. Offset very much by the good, the privilege of playing that part, but it was a challenging period in my life, so I may write about. I have to see.

"Did I keep anything? I stole some things if that's your question," she says cheekily. "Of course. We all steal. I stole my dressing room plaque. But you know, the minute I stood up from the chair for my last shot, which was a close up, one of the guys came and started to take out the screws. They dismantled the chair! From underneath me! If Bob Picardo hadn't appeared at that moment, I would've been

People call it reinvention, I call it opportunity. I ran into the arms of Red and Red ran into the arms of Mulgrew

of survival'. This is a breathtaking thing to behold, without the constant interruption of testosterone. Correct?"

Correct.

"That's what you're saying, it's uninterrupted female skill. We're looking at survival on every conceivable level, from somebody like Red, whose excellence she has to find with her kitchen, with her nature, both maternal and menacing and God knows what I took the fall for, but I've been in there for 15 years, so it was significant. But you go from there to a character like Big Boo, whose tenderness is revealed in series three in the most extraordinary way, I think, and then you jump back to Piper and Alex and what's going on between the two of them. It's what happens when you

Because you just know that life is in the balance at every turn. There are no boundaries here. Within very, very extreme boundaries, there are no boundaries. It's that trying to define the very physical nature of the thing that I think is so outstandingly good."

There's something else, dare we say, more exciting than *OITNB* going on with Kate at the moment – her first book, a memoir called *Born With Teeth*. It's no exaggeration that it's astoundingly good.

"I've wanted to write all my life, clearly, and this is my debut book at an age now where most other authors have had their contribution well before. But I had no intention of writing this book as another, as you put it, 'tell all' or Hollywood memoir, it was to be a book of



LEFT KATE IN CHARACTER AS RED IN ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK

a miserable wreck. I took away sevens years of the hardest work I've ever done. The hardest. And the truest work."

A 50 year celebration is planned for London in 2016, she tells us, with all five captains in attendance. Does she find it's the role the gay guys most strongly associate with her?

"I think they love Captain Janeway. But I'd say there's been a hue and a cry about Red from your community. I'd say so. Certainly my male gay friends. They love Red, but their allegiance is probably to Janeway, yes."

We will always be Team Janeway.

"And that's a pretty amazing thing, isn't it?"

But then there's those of us that didn't recognise our captain when she went to prison...

Kate laughs loudly. "Isn't that amazing! Oh, I get that quite a lot. The other thing I love almost more than that is, 'What do you mean, she's not Russian?' Those people who didn't know me at all – it's almost as satisfying. People call it reinvention, I call it opportunity. There she was, this part. Really, I ran into the arms of Red and Red ran into the arms of Mulgrew, and it's been kismet ever since."

With another book and more time in Lichfield pending, there's one more thing Kate has her sights on.

"You know what I'd love to do? I'd love to do Call The Midwife. I LOVE Call The Midwife. I want you to put it out there, I want to play the Irish nun who comes in and wreaks havoc. Alright? Put it in print.

"Time seems to be going by very quickly, so I'm living it, I'm taking wonderful trips. I went to Africa this year, I'm thinking of taking the Trans Siberian Express next year, and introducing an element of stillness into this life of mine. Which would be altogether unorthodox for me, but I'm going to try it," she laughs. ■

Born With Teeth is out now, @thekatemulgrew

WONDER WOMAN

WORDS SIMON BUTTON IMAGE LUKE FONTANA

Sashaying into the incredibly fancy Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Paris, Laverne Cox rattles off some pleasantries in what sounds like fluent French then says: “That’s all I got.” That ain’t all Laverne’s got. The *Orange Is the New Black* star has got the lot – beauty, talent and smarts to spare

Add in the fact that she’s Hollywood’s most high-profile transgender actress who campaigns for LGBT causes, and it’s no wonder she’s been hailed as a role model. Not that Laverne, 31, likes being called that. “In fact I hate the term ‘role model’,” I think

it’s presumptuous to think anyone should model their life after me, but I do like the term ‘possibility model’ and thinking about what’s possible.”

She cites Candis Cayne, who played Carmelita on *Dirty Sexy Money* in 2007, as an inspiration. “She was the first transgender actress to have a role on a primetime TV show,” Laverne marvels, “and that moment made me believe it was possible for me to be an out trans woman and have a career as an actress. That changed my life. It created a possibility for me, so I like the idea of possibility.”

All eyes are now on Laverne, as they were on Candis, thanks to her wonderful turn as Sophia Burset on the critical and commercial success that is *Orange Is the New Black* – the Netflix-streaming, eyebrow-raising, envelope-pushing, altogether-brilliant comedy drama set in a women’s prison. “So yes, there’s a tremendous amount of pressure,” the actress admits of how her profile has been upped since the first series aired in 2013. “I feel that

pressure and it’s challenging and difficult and scary and all that stuff.”

She needn’t worry. Her portrayal of Sophia is brilliant, with plenty of sass and humour alongside all the issue-raising about transgender health care and a heart-wrenching storyline about her trying to be a mum to son Michael from inside Litchfield Penitentiary. Laverne’s in Paris on a promotional jaunt for the third series, which is on Netflix now, and she says we can expect lots more Sophia as show creator Jenji Kohan continues to expertly juggle a huge ensemble cast.

“Sophia’s storyline definitely heats up in the third series,” the actress smiles. “This go-round, Jenji was interested in the themes of faith and motherhood. Those are the themes that permeate the series, so in the first episode, you see a glimpse of Sophia negotiating motherhood from behind bars. She’s negotiating trying to be there for Michael in the best way she can. Her desire to protect her son begins to threaten



her position at Litchfield later in the series – which is really juicy and really real, and I had the best time playing those scenes.”

Orange Is the New Black has proven a game-changer for Laverne, who was born in Alabama and studied acting in New York. She already had some interesting stuff on her CV, including producing and co-hosting transgender makeover show TRANSform Me, and appearing as a contestant on I Want to Work for Diddy, which bagged a GLAAD award for outstanding reality programme. She'd also popped up on the likes of Law and Order, but admits that when Orange came along, she was struggling for work.

“I was just happy to get a job! I hadn't worked in, like, nine months as an actress and I was thinking about going to graduate school and not acting anymore. I was thinking ‘I gotta make some money’ because my rent was past due. I'd literally been in eviction court and stuff, so I wanted a job real bad.”

Then Jenji cast her as Sophia. “And I thought, ‘Oh my God, this is what I've been waiting for and I'll get to show that I can act and maybe I'll get more work off the back of it.’ That was around the filming of the third episode and I was thinking, ‘Maybe a few people will watch this because it seems they'll be curious about the show and also maybe casting directors will see it and want to hire me.’ That's all I was hoping for and then it turned into...”

Laverne throws her exquisitely manicured hands up in the air in glee. She's looking sensational in a figure-hugging dress and, yes, it's orange – but it's a subtler shade than the garish uniform she sports on the show. Either that, or an equally unflattering grey number. The success of the show has given her a platform from which to speak about transgender

rights and she thinks television is doing a good job of representing the LGBT community.

“Well, it's doing better,” she smiles. “The TV industry is doing better than the movie industry, for sure. GLAAD just released a report where they tracked media representations of LGBT people and they noted that on TV this past year there was an unprecedented number of transgender characters – but on film there were none. No major characters in the United States, at least.”

She's philosophical rather than incensed about that. “Maybe there were some independent films made [with transgender characters] and in fact I did one that's coming out this year,” she says, referring to comedy drama Grandma. GT met Laverne before images were released of Eddie Redmayne as trans Danish artist Einar Wegener in the forthcoming film The Danish Girl, but Laverne thinks the general lack of LGBT characters in big movies is down to the current state of the art. “It's so hard to get movies made now. So much of it is about overseas sales and big stars and 3D and action. TV is more character-driven and more story-driven.”

That said, would she like to headline a 3D action flick herself? “I would! I've been wanting to be a superhero for a long time. I have a lot of fans who want me to be Wonder Woman and they want me to be Storm.”

For now, though, Sophia is keeping her busy and she sees the rise of Netflix and other streaming services as a real door-opener. “TV is the new black,” she laughs. “I don't think my career would've been possible without this major paradigm shift.” Plus Netflix allows Jenji to make the show her way, with as much nudity, violence and lesbian action as she likes. The creator has been quoted as saying she has a ‘no assholes

policy’ on set. “And honestly there aren't any,” Laverne insists, “and that starts from the top. With Jenji and Lisa Vinnecour, who's one of our executive producers, they're so cool and it trickles down. There really aren't any assholes on our set. It's frickin' amazing.”

It's also amazing how the show celebrates women of every size, shape, colour, creed, background and sexuality. Laverne quotes from acting mentor Susan Batson's book Truth, where she talks about Will and Grace star Debra Messing saying, ‘People don't go to the movies to see you, they go to see themselves’. The actress couldn't agree more.

“That's what our audiences are responding to. They're seeing people who look like them and who have similar experiences to them. When we were on a panel a few weeks ago Danielle Brooks [who plays Tasha Jefferson aka Taystee] spoke so eloquently about being a dark-skinned, curvy girl and how there was no one like her on television. She was so moved that she gets to be that person for other dark-skinned, curvy girls and it was so moving to hear her say that.”

Laverne is understandably proud of making the cover of Essence magazine and she's happy to see Caitlyn Jenner making the cover of Vanity Fair, which she hopes will spark further debate. “Far too often transgender health care has been framed as cosmetic and it really isn't – it's medically necessary. It's something everyone should be entitled to if they want it but it's also important to note that not all transgender people want to medically transition. Everyone's narrative is different but it's about access.”

Spoken like a true possibility model. ■

Orange Is the New Black is on Netflix now, @oitnb, @lavernecox

RIGHT LAVERNE AS SOPHIA IN ORANGE IS THE NEW BLACK





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OPPOSITE
VESTS & SWIMWEAR BY KORMARNO





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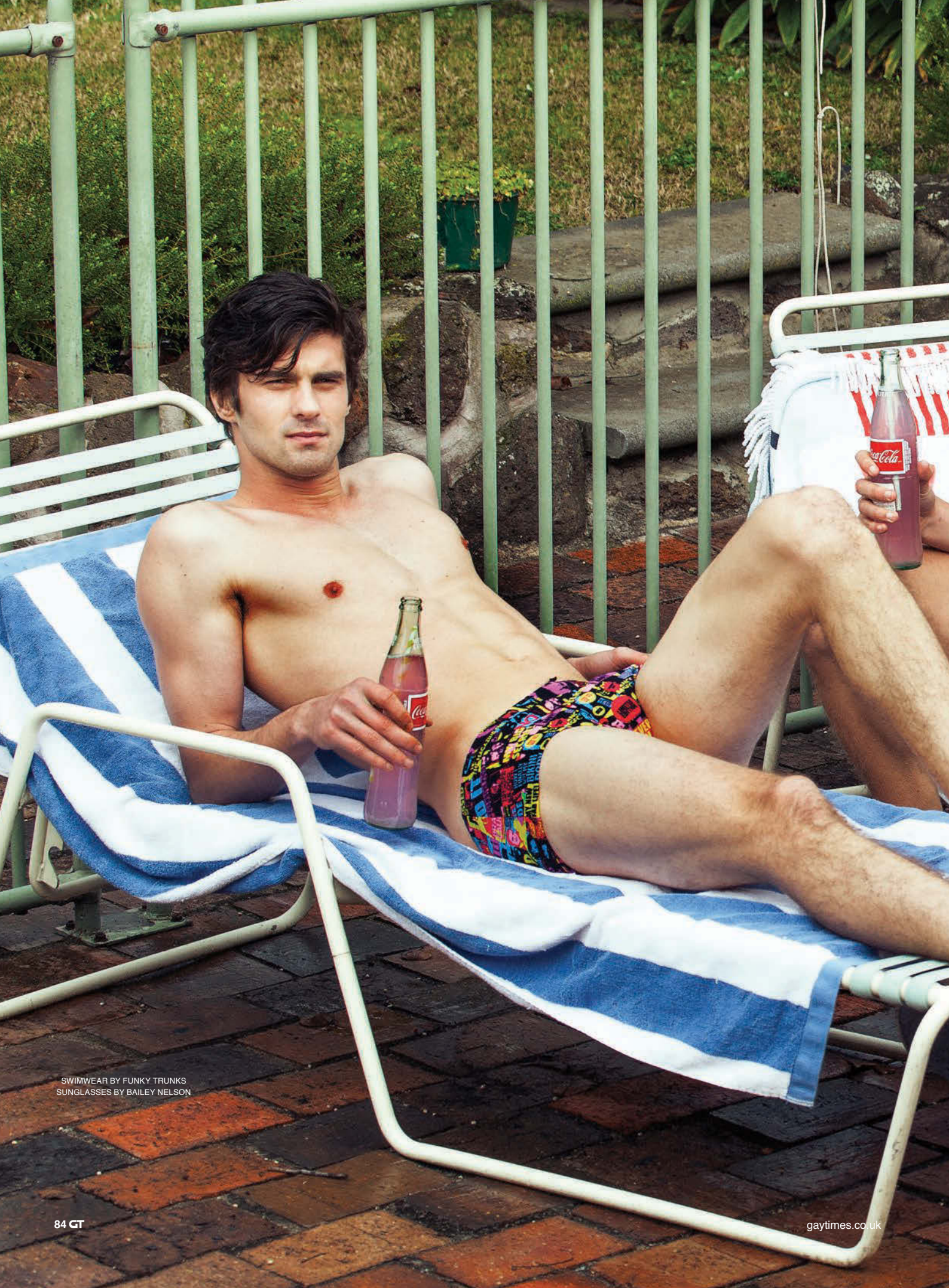
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[summer/15]

grooming



Made In Ibiza by Jimmy Boyd

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SUMMER SCENTSATIONS



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The Essence of Central Park by Carthusia

Magnolia unfolds its sparkling citrus aroma of lemon, teamed with mandarine over lily of the valley and the citrus bite of geranium. Green and energetic.
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Forte + Forte by Profumi del Forte

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£148/ 50ml, Liberty

This summer sees the rise of a new generation of citrus scents that have tremendous energy and last the distance. Citrus scents are the only smells to physically affect the brain – they make us feel happy. These scents make you feel fresh when travelling and energised at work, so invest in a little olfactory joy this year.



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Vista Sul Mare by Linari

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HE'S BAAAACK!

John Grant is the greatest motherfucker that you're ever gonna meet – and he's coming back with a new album! His third effort *Grey Tickles, Black Pressure* is fizzing with electropop and tempered ballads, due to be released on 2 October. He's touring Europe, too – with dates in Dublin, Brighton and London in November. And it couldn't have come at a better time. The truth is, pop is just less-fun without him. ■

Grey Tickles, Black Pressure will be released on Bella Union, johngrantmusic.com, @johnwgrant

[92]
Ooo, Giorgio feels love
Especially from us gays. The dance icon talks his new album, *Britney and Donna*. ■



[97]
As tough as boots...
...and there ain't any tougher than Little Boots, who shows us what it means to werk it. ■



[98]
All adding up
The award-winning Villagers opens up about sexuality and third album *Darling Arithmetic*. ■



It couldn't be more fitting to find Giorgio Moroder, the King of Disco who shaped Donna Summer's career and pretty much invented electronic dance music, sporting Rainbow Flag socks. "It's pure coincidence," says the producer and songwriter when GT meets him, "but I'm glad you like them."

WORDS SIMON BUTTON

They're called Happy Socks, which is appropriate for the man whose music is the very definition of happy, and they're from Sweden. The manufacturers sent Italian-born Giorgio 75 pairs in honour of his 75th birthday in April, not that he looks his age – or is planning his retirement.

He accepts the King of Disco crown with grace, saying: "As long as I'm the king of something, not the grandfather, I'm happy with that." But call him a legend and he scowls. "Oh no, don't call me that! It makes you sound old and past it. I want to be less legend, more current."

Giorgio couldn't be more current,

actually. His new *Déjà Vu* album finds him collaborating with red-hot talents like Sia and Charli XCX, as well as Kylie, Kelis and Britney. That's an enviable guest list of vocalists, but the über-producer isn't too proud to admit it was part wish list, part business decision.

"The record company came up with names and I came up with names, which I knew were also on the same label, because it's so much easier that way," he says, dressed down in black – apart from those multicoloured socks – and as bright as a button despite a packed promotional schedule. "It's quite a long process, then there's getting

the rights to release singles – which unfortunately, with some of the acts, we can't do because they have their own things in place."

But none of the names were forced upon him. "They're all people I love," he insists, gushing about Charli in particular as he sings a snippet of Fancy. "I love her. She's such a great composer, right?"

Giorgio seems a bit wistful about the old days of being in the studio with Donna or Debbie Harry [for *Call Me*] or David Bowie [for the Cat People theme] or Phil Oakey [Together In Electric Dreams]. On *Déjà Vu*, the tracks were mostly laid down in one place, the vocals done

GIORGIO

[music]

A close-up portrait of a middle-aged man with white hair and a mustache, looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a dark blue shirt. The background is dark and out of focus.

MORODER

in another, then the final mix done at the end. "It's totally different now," he sighs. "With Donna Summer, for example, I'd go into the studio with a little bit of an idea of the song. We'd work on it and Donna would write the lyrics with Pete [as in Pete Bellotte]. You can't do that anymore. Nowadays the artists are always so busy."

He cites Sia, singer of the album's title track, as an example. "She's in Australia one day, then she's in London, then she's somewhere else. To get these artists in the studio on the same day, in the same country, in the same city isn't possible. Plus Sia is very reserved. She has her sound engineer who knows how her voice sounds best and how to get the best out of her, which I did with Donna because I knew her so well. I could say, 'I don't like it, do it this way instead' – and she did it. But with someone you don't usually work with, you can't do that because you don't know them. Artists are so sensitive. One wrong word and the whole thing collapses."

Giorgio hints it almost happened with Freddie Mercury. "It was a little tough," he says of recording Love Kills for the Metropolis soundtrack in Munich in 1984. It sounds like there may've been too many cooks: Giorgio with his co-producer and Freddie with his. "Freddie was such a talented guy – a composer, lyricist, singer..." And also part-time ballet dancer. Giorgio laughs. "Yeah, that too. So to tell a guy like that, such a great entertainer, to sing something slightly differently was to offend him. It was tense."

There are also rumours of tensions with Britney Spears, who covers Tom's Diner on *Déjà Vu* – and who apparently couldn't be bothered to finish the vocal. Giorgio gives her props for choosing the song herself, then explains: "She recorded it but afterwards I thought it was too

short and I wanted to add a bridge. Maybe she didn't like the idea or she didn't have time. I thought, 'I can sing this with a vocoder' – so now I have a duet with Britney Spears. What a dream!"

The man who's the first to admit he doesn't have much of a singing voice – hence the vocoder – found his muse back in the 1970s when he hooked up with Summer. "Those were quite some interesting times," he deadpans of a collaboration that produced Love to Love You Baby and I Feel Love and Hot Stuff, to name but three seminal tracks they recorded together.

Not surprisingly, Giorgio is proudest of I Feel Love. The album it was written for, I Remember Yesterday, was based around the concept of moving from 50s and 60s pastiches, like the title track and Love's Unkind, to the present day – the present day back then being 1977 – and beyond. "In my mind I was thinking, 'This should be the sound of the future'," Giorgio says of the album's closing

"Maybe she didn't like the idea or didn't have the time. I thought 'I can sing this with a vocoder' so now I have a duet with Britney Spears. What a dream!"

track. "I came up with the idea of doing it all with a synthesiser, but I didn't have a clue how to do it."

The result was a series of happy accidents and experiments. It was a whole new sound and the birth of EDM long before that term was ever coined. Does Giorgio take credit for that? "Well, people tell me that's the case," he demurs, "and it's true that a lot of EDM sounds are based on that song."

The Donna album he's most proud of? He doesn't hesitate. It's Bad Girls, on the gatefold sleeve of which he's pictured flashing the singer. "That was such a bad picture," he cringes. Soon afterwards Summer went all religious, ostracising some gay fans in the process. Giorgio, on the other hand, has always embraced the gay fan base, which he traces back to Love to Love You Baby. "The gay community embraced it in its original 17-minute version in discos, then they kept requesting it on radio stations. Plus, those songs with Donna were sexy songs with sexy lyrics, and I Feel Love become such a huge anthem. When I DJ now, that's the song that most gets requested."

He puts his resurgence down to Daft Punk – who asked him to participate in their Random Access Memories album in 2013. "I didn't have a clue what they wanted. They just said, 'Come into the studio and talk about your life'. I was pleasantly surprised when I heard the result, then when that album came out it changed everything."

He's in demand, not just in the studio but also on the DJ circuit, which he's thrilled about. "I always wanted to be a performer but I wasn't driven enough and my voice wasn't good enough," Giorgio beams. "Now I get to perform in front of 30,000 people in France, Chicago or Mexico." He grins. "It's absolutely incredible." ■

The album *Déjà Vu* is out now, @giorgiomoroder



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Venue location:
Central Hall Westminster, Storeys Gate, London SW1H 9NH.
Doors open: 10am-4pm





Years & Years **Communion**

Under the weight of expectation that being dubbed The Sound of 2015 carries, the debut album from Years & Years manages to deliver on all fronts. It's a proper old fashioned album in the sense of being curated from start to end, a gentle roller coaster of their distinctive soulful electro. You're taken from reflective electronic ballads to crying-at-the-discotheque dance bangers, all genres that they've made their own. When King rolls around it's like a familiar friend in sea of similar sounding, well-known Y&Y tracks. Everything has a place as you feel like you're being taken on a tour of Olly Alexander's damaged but optimistic psyche. It's exactly his battered lyrics and emotive voice that make this album. There's something deliberately dry and robotic about the production, which makes Olly's yearning and flailing of heart decorated sleeves all the more effective. Our favourite track Ties is the most Robyn-esque strop, and perfectly captures the fear of intimacy and transitory nature of certain big city gay love narratives. Or maybe that's just us. Without that fragility, Years & Years would be another so-so electro pop band. With it, they're about the best incidentally gay thing in pop right now. ■■■■■■

Prides The Way Back Up No way of avoiding this – they sound like The Killers. Almost every vocal is heavily layered and guitar lines fill out their stadium-aiming anthems. Little Danger dabbles with a synth line and a Cher Believe vocal treatment, whereas Same Mistakes shows they can do slow tempo. ■■■■■■

Seven Davis Jr Universes A fresh slice of contemporary funk, dancing at the periphery of house music and occasionally flirting

with jungle. There's a frenetic energy to everything like the beats can't come fast enough, the slower moments get a bit introspective and the whole thing is a strange experience indeed. ■■■■■■

HollySiz My Name Is The video for The Light made us cry, and the rest of the album is made up of equally heart-warming, hope-filled twee pop. With songs crafted from straight up guitar riffs and drum machine simplicity, HollySiz is a French one-woman Blondie. ■■■■■■



The Chemical Brothers **Born in the Echoes**

This is no gay-as-in-happy disco – but one massive dark, dystopian and paranoia inducing dance nightmare. Poppy lead single Go aside, there's throbbing baselines, tribal rave synths and warped drum rolls providing the structure, while heavily-breathed vocals compete with monk-like chanting. It's futuristic and scary at the same time, with little nods to their past being I'll See You There, all sixties Middle Eastern wig out set to big beat like Setting Sun and the song Just Bang using some old school dance instruction sampling. The last track throws up a calming neck rub in the form of a cute euro-pop number, ending a heavy, worthwhile trip. ■■■■■■



Tame Impala **Currents**

Impala has stepped away from the scuzzily clouded vocals of yesteryear and embraced a clear-voiced, harmonious approach to his psychedelic disco. It's as if The Beach Boys were actually on holiday and relaxed rather than manically singing about being happy all the time, dealing instead with relationships falling apart and replicating a specifically French-sounding type of electro – the blissed out end of Daft Punk, with a bit of Pacific! and Sébastien Tellier in there. The rare deviation is in Past Life, with its booming bass and experimental existential spoken word crisis. Otherwise it's a delightful dream of a record. ■■■■■■

As the boss of her own record label, Little Boots is back and means business. We set up a conference call with the pop CEO, just before connecting with her genius LinkedIn profile – which is quite possibly the most exciting thing to happen to one of the world's worst networking websites. She's teaming with a theme and really running with it.

"It's definitely not a concept album," she reassures us, "but it's got a vision and coherency. I think it's that 'fake it 'til you make it' thing, if you fake something well enough, you just become it."

"You start saying you're the CEO of your own company and then people just accept that. And you are. It's supposed to be a playful take on all these themes, but they're also very real things and issues that I've been through. I don't wear my heart on my sleeve, but it's all in there."

We love it. When most female popstars create an alter-ego, they blindly wander into the Madonna/Whore dichotomy. Little Boots has neatly sidestepped that offering and gone straight to the top, opting for a powerful position of authority.

"Yeah, I mean, I love shoulder pads. I really like hanging around in offices..." she deadpans. If you hadn't got it by now, the whole thing is a half joke, half sincere persona. The music that goes with the look is *Working Girl*, an album of on-brand songs about getting shit done, with an automated voice messaging service set to the hold music of previous hit *Remedy*.

There's hints of disco era Róisín Murphy, a glorious shot of heyday Saint Etienne, and it's delivered with all of Little Boots trademark pop sensibility with an added 90s dance bent. She's described it before as 'hardcore pop', and nowhere is this more evident than on our favourite track on the album, the ballsy and bonkers *Real Girl*.

"It's basically punching-you-in-the-face-until-you-bleed pop. I imagine it's for hardcore rock fans, but pop ones,

I'm not really sure what they look like. I was a bit nervous about putting that on the album, but I'm really glad I did now as at least five people have said it's their favourite track and they're all the people who in inverted commas 'get it'."

We like to think we do, and when we hear the title *Working Girl*, we think of the 80s film just before our inner drag queen kicks in and says "you better werk!"

"Well, it's totally like executive realness," LB points out. "Loads of people have just been 'doesn't that mean you're a prostitute?' I think that's what's interesting, is that it's got so many connotations. It does literally mean I'm a really hard-working female, I always have been."

It's true as after some US dates, she'll be back at Manchester Pride, hoping to nab a selfie opportunity with Atomic Kitten. It's an environment she's familiar with, having done the Pride circuit herself.

"That was my look at one point, huge

false eyelashes, a lot of make up... I remember doing one Pride gig where there were loads of drag queens and looking around going 'I really blend in here...' it's a riot, I love it."

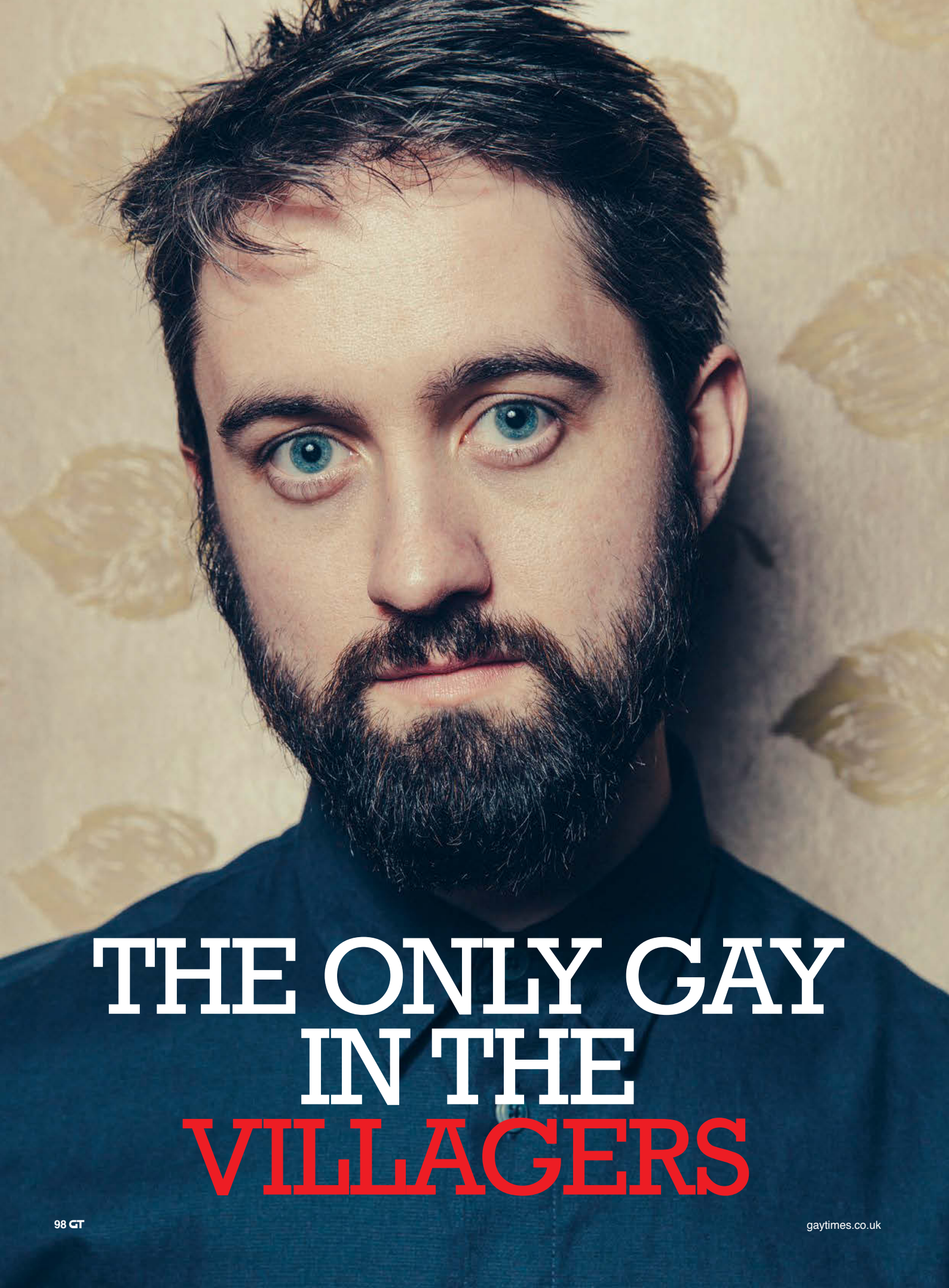
This time, rather than presenting an idealised femininity, she's taking control of it.

"I felt so dressed up and dolled up and fake in every way imaginable, you lose sense of yourself. Once I'd got the fake tan off, chicken fillets and the eyelashes, probably everything a drag queen uses, where am I under all this? Whereas now I dress up just as much, but it's knowing. It's when you're in control it becomes more powerful and playful. Now I'm dressing up every time I put on my ridiculous jackets and get my briefcase out, but I'm in control of it. Everyone is dressing up and playing roles, that's what pop music is for." ■

Working Girl is out 10 July on her own On Repeat Records, [linkedin.com/in/littleboots](https://www.linkedin.com/in/littleboots), @littleboots

LABEL QUEEN





THE ONLY GAY IN THE VILLAGERS

...that we know of, anyway. Villagers is the musical brainchild of Irish indie-folkster Conor O'Brien, with a changing band of musicians helping him out for the past seven years. After being nominated for the Mercury Music Prize twice, and winning a prestigious Ivor Novello award for songwriting, Villagers' third album Darling Arithmetic – released this year – saw Conor confront his sexuality head-on in his songs for the very first time. And just in time for his country's referendum, too...

WORDS RYAN BUTCHER IMAGES ANDREW WHITTON

Sometimes the planets really do align when it comes to interviews. We're sat in a chapel at London's historic Royal Chelsea Hospital with Villagers, aka Conor O'Brien. In the distance, we can hear gay pop icon Rufus Wainwright sound checking. And in just a few hours, the pair will take to the stage in these iconic surroundings and play to the thousands of fans braving the summer rain with a spellbinding pair of sets.

The chapel is a significant location in light of recent events. Conor's home country of Ireland has just made history by becoming the first to vote en masse in favour of same-sex marriage. It's something he's immensely proud of, given the country's history of Catholicism and repression by the church.

"It was amazing, wasn't it?" Conor beams, after we literally pull up a pew to start the interview. He confesses to being jet lagged, as he and his band have just landed in the UK after a major tour of the US west coast, but he has an undeniable charm that's hard not to get swept up in.

"I was walking around the town I grew up in during the lead-up to the referendum, and lots of people had huge Yes badges on them. It was basically affirming that they had no problem with me. It was electric, and there were lots of tears. It overwhelmed me, that the country voted yes. It erased so many feelings I had growing up in

Ireland. The fact that people were coming over on planes just to vote – it was like we were taking our country back. It was real change."

He puts extra emphasis on the word 'change' – which ends up being an overarching theme in our interview with Conor. This year, with his seminal new album Darling Arithmetic, Conor made a change and wrote candidly about his sexuality for the first time – whether it's on the album's opener Courage, which tackles issues of self-acceptance and wearing your heart on your sleeve, or tracks like Little Bigot and Hot Scary Summer, referencing Conor's own experiences with homophobia and his utopian dream of people just loving one another for who they are.

But this isn't a 'coming out' album, as such. Nor is this a 'coming out' interview. While living proudly as a gay man for years, it's just the first time Conor has peeled back the curtain and let his sexuality filter into his songwriting in such an obvious way.

"I was scared I'd overwrite," Conor tells us, when explaining his decision to bring homosexuality into his songs. "When I was writing about homophobes and stuff, I was scared it might make people feel like they were being left out of the album, if it's not something they've experienced before. I wanted the words to have a universal meaning. Like, there's a line in Hot Scary Summer when it says, 'We got good

at pretending, and then pretending got us good.' I wrote that because I knew that it could be applied for any relationship – gay or straight – OR that it could be about hiding your sexuality."

We admit it's a line we can relate back to different times in our lives; times when we haven't been completely comfortable expressing affection with a significant other in certain public environments.

"I still get that!" Conor agrees.

"I still do it a lot when I'm in Dublin, even now when I'm 100% out, I'm still like, 'Stop holding my hand!' I just get really awkward, it's still left in me a little bit, you know? It runs deep."

We know.

"When I was younger as a teenager," he continues, "I'd try and test the limits of what I could get away with in public with my sexuality, and I'd be kicked back in. Well, not literally kicked, but I'd be chased down streets or given odd looks."

"I'm from a country where it took until I was ten-years-old for it to actually become legal for me to be me, which is a weird thing to say in the 21st century. When I was younger I was academic, I looked up to my teachers and my elders, but when they'd tell me things like it wasn't right to be gay – it hurt me to my core. But after time I just thought, 'Fuck this, I'm going to make some beautiful art from this.'"

And make some beautiful art

he did. But another change with Darling Arithmetic saw Conor strip back the layered soundscapes he became known for on his first two albums – 2010's *Becoming a Jackal* and 2013's *{Awayland}* – instead approaching his third effort with just an acoustic guitar and a makeshift recording rig he's had since he was 16-years-old.

"I thought I was recording the demos for the album," he explains, "but I realised the sounds were so nice and sort of intimate, with the little quivers in my voice and the noises of birds in the background. It kind of documented the time I spent in the house I live in, just making these emotionally-diverging songs. The whole process instantly made me feel less guarded. For me, it was really therapeutic."

We confess to Conor that after being Villagers fans for years, and working in gay media, it

ashamedly took us by surprise to learn that he was gay while listening to Darling Arithmetic. It's met with a reassuring chuckle.

"I think it make sense if you read the lyrics!" Conor says with a wry smile, referencing back to his first two albums. "I was expressing it already, just not explicitly. But I knew I wanted to get at least a couple of albums out of it!"

Rufus has stopped sound checking at this point, and strolls into the chapel to take a look at the breathtaking architecture of the building for himself. Talk quickly turns to role models – Rufus being one we share with Conor from our formative years.

"I'm very aware of myself now I'm in my 30s," he tells us, "and I'm very comfortable, but I do get a sense that I'm the older generation now, and I should be passing on a little bit of wisdom. When I was growing up, Ian McKellen was such

a big thing for me. I remember watching him on *Have I Got News For You* and thinking, wow, this guy has so much gravitas – I remember being obsessed with him and having cutouts about him from all the papers."

We point out that for many young kids struggling with sexuality and gender issues, Darling Arithmetic might be a first point of call. It's something Conor never anticipated, but has already seem come to fruition.

"I got a couple of really beautiful letters on this tour, and one was from a mother who was finding it hard to accept that her son was gay. But they both listened to the album together and she said it helped her come to terms with it."

And as an artist, Conor tells us he can't ask for much more from his work than that.

We talk further about Darling Arithmetic and his new live set-up. "I'm two albums in now, I need a harp," he laughs, "and a flugelhorn!" And there's also talk about the future. "I want to do something a bit more glamorous. I want colour and something less jagged and cold. Maybe I'll do a Kylie-inspired pop album," he jokes again. But he tells us a story about a trip back to his home country around the time of the referendum which stuck with us.

"I was at a wedding in Ireland the other day," he starts, "and a priest drunkenly came out to me and told me he had a boyfriend. I was like, this is crazy. It's so scary to think what might've happened if people had voted no. If the public would've told us we didn't belong."

But like we said earlier, there's a change in Ireland. And it's thanks to people like Conor that these changes can continue to happen, and messages of love and acceptance be spread around the world. ■

Darling Arithmetic is out now, wearevillagers.com, [@wearevillagers](https://twitter.com/wearevillagers)





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Ezra Furman With a backing band called The Boyfriends, Ezra Furman is a queer one no doubt – even if he wouldn't ascribe to either gay or straight labels. He has the lippy-loving occasionally cross-dressing wardrobe approach of Perfume Genius, but musically is not afraid of that emotion called joy. His latest album *Perpetual Motion People* is full of it. His affinity for a bit of saxophone and a melodic line put him more in line with Patrick Wolf, particularly with songs like *Haunted Head* that contain all too familiar lines like “I’m having too much fun, my hands around the toilet like a long lost chum...”

There's a bit of indie pop doo-wop going on, if you can imagine a gender confused male bodied Meghan Trainor, no stylist, hungover and chain smoking... it's nothing like Meghan Trainor basically. If you can handle a wailey rasp and odd moment of self indulgence, there's hits a plenty in this charity shop haul of up-cycled rock and roll, folk, blues and garage. His stop motion video for album opener *Restless Year* is a great statement of intent; a constantly shifting jerky mess of an upbeat sing along, we had to double check it wasn't the soundtrack to Australian comedy *Please Like Me*. Adorably quirky stuff. ■

Perpetual Motion People is out now on Bella Union, ezrafurman.com, @ezrafurman



[playlist]

Chloë Howl *Bad Dream* A

sultry slow burner, all old timey

vocal filters and smoky underground prohibition bar

vibes. ■ **Lenno ft Dragonette** *The Best* Dragonette

really know how to expertly throw an expletive into

a chorus, and do so with aplomb, looking a hot

mess and feeling their fucking best. ■ **Bryan Ferry**

Johnny & Mary We always thought everyone should

give up covering this song after Placebo's effort. Not

sure we're wrong. ■ **Icona Pop** *Emergency* There's

a whiff of Electro Velvet about it, but otherwise it's

the kind of pop number you wish Christina Aguilera would

come back with. ■ **Hurts** *Some Kind of Heaven*

It's a Euro trash banger dressed down and given

orchestral flourishes instead of what it's begging out

for – donks, rave horns, car alarms and the kitchen

sink. ■ **Liz** *When I Rule The World* Sounds a

bit like the Kissy Sell Out remix of Gwen Stefani's

Wind It Up, but with the impatience of K-pop, sung

by a bratty ADD chipmunk Britney. ■ **Hometown**

Where I Belong A thigh-slapping, rip-roaring Irish

boyband mid-to-up tempo acoustic pop ditty. The

la-la-la's make for an easy drunk sing along, which

says more about us than any national stereotype. ■

Major Lazer *Powerful* Ellie Goulding's raspy vocals

compete with Tarrus Riley in a modern duet face

off to Mr Lazer's beefy masc-dom-top pop backing.

■ **Foxes** *Body Talk* Some Duke Dumont steel

drumming, Katy B pop garage and Florence top line

wailing all vie for attention in this everything-great-

about-modern-pop by numbers track. ■



Mariann Rosa sounds like a Schlager artist but is actually a former Norwegian rockstar turned solo alt-pop starlet with the kooky styling somewhere between Paramore and a young Toyah Wilcox. Her debut single *Banjo For My Bitches* is part Shampoo, part

Charli XCX and part unavoidably catchy Scandi-pop. The major rocky overtones probably come from her stint as lead singer of Surferosa, with pop kudos from being a judge on Norway's version of *Idol*. However, her recent efforts are infused with weird synth break-downs and

tribal screamy 90s pop references. And if you're more inclined for a harder, clubbier experience, check out the Igorfoxx remix for a late night Berlin moment. *Banjo For My Bitches* is out now, mariannrosa.com, soundcloud.com/mariannrosa ■



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[the list]

With the sunny season getting into full-swing, what better time to celebrate one of Hollywood's most iconic summer institutions – the hormone-riddled, often murder-strewn American summer camp...

[01] Wet Hot American Summer Camp Firewood Things going for Camp Firewood – a spectacular comedy cast [see our on-demand review of its successor] unrelenting stupidity, and a gay Bradley Cooper.

[02] Moonrise Kingdom Camp Ivanhoe Wes Anderson has a knack for capturing nostalgia on-screen, and they don't come more whimsically childhood-like than the adventures in love and lightning of orphan Sam.

[03] Friday the 13th Camp Crystal Lake Arguably the most fun camp on this list – if only to watch such stupid horny teens get brutally murdered – it's also the deadliest thanks to a hockey mask-wearing psychopath.

[04] Camp Camp Ovation The campest camp on the list – how many times can we write 'camp' in one entry? – this 2003 tale of a performing arts summer camp has toe-tapping cheesy singalong numbers galore.

[05] Dirty Dancing Kellerman's While not strictly a standard summer camp, Dirty Dancing boasts potentially the sappiest, most memorable depiction of a summertime romance on-record. NOBODY PUTS etc etc.



why we love cinemas in the summer

What with this being our big, shiny, spanking summer issue and all, we want to celebrate the joy of heading to the cinema in the summer months. Not only for the slew of blockbusters – brace yourselves, franchises are

coming – but for the escape they offer from all that horrible sunshine. Both the sunburnt and the pale unite! And if you're less antisocial than us, then at least the turn in weather results in all manner of equally-as-awesome outdoor,

late-night and rooftop cinemas. On the flip side, if the English weather is as predictably unpredictable as we've come to expect, then you can always sneak into your nearby multiplex to escape the disappointment

when a fun day's plans are rained out. And then there's the cash bonus – after a week's worth of stupored boozing in the beer garden/park, the cinema offers a wallet-easing alternative to spending a night out. ■



It Follows Blu-ray/DVD With so many Hollywood horrors preferring LOUD NOISES over legitimate scares, it's always a surprise when a supernatural scare-fest comes along that's as memorable as it is chilling. But It Follows works thanks to an unforgettably smart, sassy concept. When a cursed teen shags another, they pass on a demonic stalker that can only be shaken by having sex with another person – The Ring with STDs, essentially. ■■■■■■

Wet Hot American Summer: First Day of Camp Netflix 2001's critical-flop-but-cult-favourite summer camp spoof movie returns for an eight episode prequel series. Hilariously, not only have the entire comedy smörgåsbord of a cast reunited – Elizabeth Banks, Paul Rudd, Bradley Cooper, Amy Poehler and more – but they're playing younger versions of their original characters. Characters who they were already ten years too old to be playing in the first place. Expect slapstick and starry silliness in equal measure. ■■■■■■

X-Men: Days of Future Past – Rogue Cut Blu-ray The long-awaited new edit of Bryan Singer's time-travel mega mutant-fest arrives on Blu-ray with a whopping 17 minutes of new footage, featuring new scenes with the main cast including more J-Law and N-Hoult, new SFX and – of course – all the Paquin that was originally shot for the future Rogue segments but which were unceremoniously cut from the original theatrical release. ■■■■■■

Wild Tales DVD Indie cinema's enfant terrible Pedro Almodóvar presents this compilation of six deliciously twisted, dark short stories spanning different locations, but all united by an enjoyably black humour and a unifying theme of revenge. Inappropriate, brutal, but also hilarious, Wild Tales is one of this year's most fun, underrated movies. ■■■■■■



Inside Out Cinema

As much as no one wants to admit it, Pixar has been riding on its own creative coat-tails for a while now. Forgettable fable *Brave* aside, its last great non-sequel was 2009's *Up*, and while it's always fun to revisit Woody, Buzz, Sulley, Mike and co, signs were pointing towards a worrying, nostalgia-destroying case of the diminishing returns.

Which is why *Inside Out* hits you all the harder, with a beautiful, complex, moving, achingly human and – most importantly – entirely original story that proves Pixar's still able to craft movies as touching for adults as they are enjoyable for the kiddywinks. Set within the mind of an 11-year-old girl, and the five anthropomorphised emotions who work/bicker with each other to steer her through her life, it's a genius concept bolstered by a pitch perfect voice cast – Amy Poehler as Joy, The US Office's Phyllis Smith as Sadness, Mindy Kaling as Disgust – and some spectacular, fittingly imaginative art design.

With a story that deftly comments on childhood, parenting, memory, loss, love, acceptance and enough throwaway psychology gags to make Freud dizzy, it's a stunning roller coaster of an emotional experience. Make sure you pack plenty of tissues. ■■■■■

Minions Cinema

Despicable Me's DayGlo idiot sidekicks break out into their own movie for a kids' flick as amusing as it is adorable. Charting the Minions' life BG – Before Gru – Kevin, Stu and Bob embark on an adventure to find their ultimate villainous overlord. Cute, preposterous and full of madcap imagination. ■■■■■

Maggie Cinema

Arnold Schwarzenegger in understated-actually-quite-good-at-acting shocker! As a doting father struggling to cope with a daughter infected with

a slow-acting zombie virus, Arnie shows a softer, more character-driven side in a surprisingly deft twist on the zombie genre. ■■■■■

Ted 2 Cinema

Unsurprisingly, considering Ted's barnstorming box office success the first time around, Seth MacFarlane and Mark Wahlberg haven't changed things for the sequel. Like, at all. A ridiculous plot about Ted gaining US citizenship is moot – if you love gross-out, stoner and sex gags galore, Ted 2 delivers in spades. ■■■■■



Amy Cinema For a woman who lived so much of her short, tragic life in the spotlight, it's understandable to question what more can be said about soul queen Amy Winehouse. But Asif Kapadia – who also directed 2010's superlative F1 documentary *Senna* – draws a tender and intimate narrative to Amy's rise, fall and upsetting end, thanks to the inclusion of a series of never-before-seen private home videos shot by friends and family. As such, we get to see less of the tabloid target, and more of the girl behind the icon, than you may be expecting. Moving and mesmeric. ■■■■■



Mr Holmes Cinema He may boast the record for the most portrayed literary human character in film and TV, but we guarantee you've never seen Sherlock Holmes like this. Bill Condon reunites with *Gods and Monsters* muse Sir Ian McKellen for a story focused on a 93-year-old, retired, curmudgeonly and potentially dementia-riddled detective at the end of his life. McKellen may predictably amaze as he disappears into the role, but fans could be frustrated as Sherlock stalwarts like Moriarty and Watson are replaced in favour of a more personal, introspective adventure. ■■■■■

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[review]

[geek]



AS BIG AS A BABY'S ARM HOLDING AN APPLE! OH, YES, IT'S MASSIVE

This month we're taking a look at the bigger picture of gay culture and comics, and checking out Massive – the first English-language anthology of gay erotic manga and the taboo-breaking men who make it. Dropping any preconceptions, there's a fantastic diversity to the spheres of gay manga ranging from the romantic to the delightfully absurd to... Well, you know when Doctor Octopus hugs Spider-Man REALLY HARD? That. Weird? Check. Wonderful? Also check.

With some really in-depth introductions, interviews and essays from some of the most exciting comic artists making manga in Japan, Massive is a proud and vibrant celebration of homosexuality, bringing this genre of comics to a much wider audience and making the medium far more visible in the west.

There are subcategories for just about anything you can imagine, the most obvious of which are yaoi, full of twinkie boys – mainly marketed to girls – and bara – although they don't call it that – which is usually chock full of muscle bears and is unquestionably for the lads.

In places it's Tom of Finland does Japan, with a culture-swapped cast of iconic hyper-masculine archetypes. Our favourite sailors, bikers and cops are replaced with samurai, sumo, high-powered executives and OK, yeah, sometimes monsters.

As anthologies go, Massive is a phenomenal primer to the gay manga culture, and provides an introduction to dozens of artists, all with their own style and perspective.

If you're new to manga, this book is a fantastic place to start. This anthology is huge and, yes, there's a lot of adult content in here as well. Some of those things you may not be able to un-see.

Regardless, it stands out and will make instant fans of these flowering masters of homoeroticism. ■

Get away from her, you adorable bitch! Fancy three inches of vinyl awesomeness? Grab the entire crew of the Nostromo from Ripley, Dallas and Parker to the poor old Kane, and in every stage of its evolution from egg to exoskeleton, the Xenomorph. Check 'em out on twitter and Instagram – #WeLoveTITANS ■

Go on... Burn a Hyrulan forest Bring the calm serenity of a Hyrulan forest to your living room with this delightful gamer scented candle from gametee.com. With notes of crushed leaves, fresh mint and refreshing eucalyptus. And the best thing, you won't need a fire rod to light it. ■

Bright light! BRIGHT LIGHT! At this scale, they're still cute even if you fed them after midnight. Just, y'know, don't get them wet. *DISCLAIMER* Toys not suitable for bath-time fun. We've basically been waiting 30 years to get our hands on these Gremlins! Still secretly hoping for a Mrs Deagle action figure, mind... ■

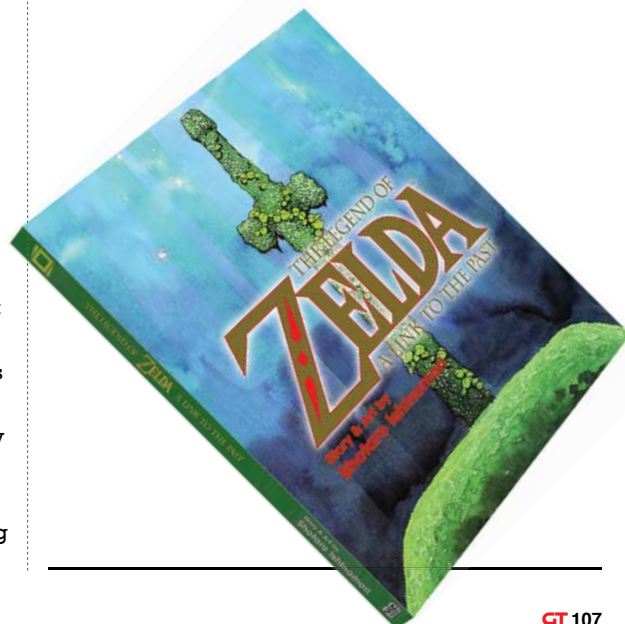


Nostalgiasasm!

Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past

Based on the cult classic video game of the same name comes this full colour graphic novel from the pen of manga legend Shotaro Ishinomori.

Looooooooong out of print – like, more than 20 years – and first serialised in Nintendo Power Magazine, The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past adapts the much-beloved, internationally-best-selling video game into 196 pages of pure gamer nostalgia, adding a couple of plot twists and a new character here and there along the way. Expect tons of lavishly drawn temples and landscapes – and inescapably 90s comic art. ■





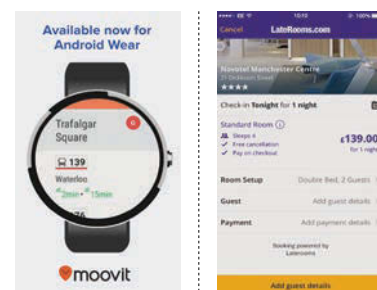
July is a bit of a ghost town when it comes to major new releases. But it's also the start of the summer show season, with developers setting out their stalls for the months and years to come. And even ahead of that, there are some goodies coming to prominence already

Fallout 4 One of the most celebrated games of the last generation gets its inevitable but very welcome sequel in the form of the gorgeous looking *Fallout 4*. Set in another post-apocalyptic future – this time Boston and its environs – the game would appear to start in familiar territory, with our hero surfacing from one of the many vaults into which people fled to escape the nukes. Venturing out of Vault 111, and seemingly accompanied by another adorable canine companion, this iteration's protagonist looks set to traverse a beautifully realised world, encountering ghouls, tech armies and the complex politics of a ravaged landscape. Premiering on PS4 and Xbox One, *Fallout 4* release details are sketchy at best, but many retailers are insinuating a 2015 release isn't off the table. ■

Uncharted Nathan Drake's fourth adventure has PS4 owners and writers of slash fiction frothing at the mouth already. But further good news has arrived in the form of *The Nathan Drake Collection*, a remastered bundle of the first three games – *Drake's Fortune*, *Among Thieves* and *Drake's Deception* – coming to PS4 this October. With improved visuals, a higher frame rate and a raft of other improvements, Nathan Drake should be fuelling hi-res fantasies well before his latest adventure hits. ■

Skylanders: Superchargers The game that's ruined parents' lives by creating a toy-based frenzy among their children, *Skylanders* is something of a phenomenon. And it's hitting back later this year with its latest evolution, *Superchargers* – this time with vehicles! Land, sea and air-based contraptions arrive with 20 new characters. The vehicles also support existing *Skylanders* characters and are, of course, customisable, so existing creatures can all have their own vehicular fun as well! ■

[apps]



Moovit Combining real-time transport authority and service provider information with the user community's input, Moovit quite cleverly creates a living, breathing transport update service in around 600 cities. It doesn't really help if you're stuck in a tunnel, mind. On Android, iOS, Windows ■

TOP10 A hotel app that listens to your preferences and crunches the data to deliver your top ten hotels based on location, budget, et al. Standard travel apps are fine if you have all the time in the world. But if clock watching and craning over your watch face is an issue, this could be for you. On iOS ■



We 'do' Bluetooth speakers a fair bit here at GT, but with good cause – come the summer months – be it at festivals, lolling in the park or making the party truly portable – we're an outdoorsy bunch! And there's an increasingly effective crop of speakers out there to help



The Way UE Roll Designed to go anywhere, the Ultimate Ears Roll is a powerful, pint-sized Bluetooth speaker that also packs one hell of a punch when it comes to sound quality. Waterproof and what UE call 'life-resistant', the Roll can clip, strap or sit wherever you put it. Worrying about dropping, bashing or battering has been consigned to the past. From £99 ■

The Future's Lava Bright A perfect blend of design, functionality, music and light, the Lava BrightSounds is a five watt speaker offering up to nine hours of room-filling sound, thanks to an in-built lithium battery. But wait, it's also an ambient nightlight that can shift from vivid hues to relaxed glows depending on your mood, your company or your tunes. From £39.99 ■

TAKE IT OUTSIDE



Hope Floats Offering a seven hour charge and sacrificing some minor performance elements in the name of a great gimmick, Monster's SuperStar BackFloat is a great little speaker that, as the name might imply, floats. With a 10 metre range, the BackFloat is the perfect way to ensure the sound stays with you, be it in the pool or just, you know, in the bath. From £129 ■

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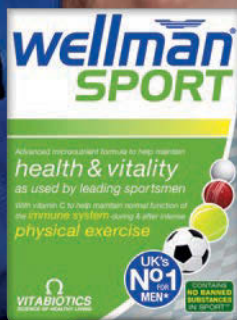
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Yasif Ayub
24, Interpreter,
London

I wanted to get my kit off as a challenge – I usually just get naked with people I want to have sex with. And in the shower. I'd never do porn, but I'm not used to being the attractive person because I was heavy for a long time. Now that people sometimes fancy me it's so strange, like, "Ooh great! Cheers!" I wouldn't have sex with myself though, 'cos that'd just be weird. Like some futuristic form of incest! As for other people, I'm a big Tom Hardy fan. I love muscle on men – big muscles and lips. And I'd like people to get off on my pics. I wouldn't get off on people getting off, but it'd help my ego. I think a man's body is the most beautiful thing. Especially some older men – my ideal guys are in their early 30s. But I've been older. Mid-40s. It might be a 'daddy' thing, but I can't do role-play. Sometimes guys ask me to say things in another language – I speak French and Spanish – but I feel a bit silly. ■



[120]

Bi-lemma

So you've just found out your boyfriend is bisexual? How should you be feeling? Guyliner has the answer. ■



[123]

Coming out...

...again. Think telling your folks you were gay was hard? Positive Luke says there's something even harder. ■



[127]

Cover girl

Tired of fitness magazines promising chiselled abs in just a few weeks? Chris Jones has a plan... ■



Someone is diagnosed with blood cancer every 20 minutes, and around 2,000 people a year are in need of a bone marrow transplant from a stranger. Just because there are restrictions on gay men giving blood doesn't mean that we can't donate from our bodies in other ways. Trainee lawyer **Stuart Brooks**, 26, has done just that, and helped save the life of a stranger by giving his bone marrow, also known as blood stem cells. He tells GT why he's leading the campaign to encourage more gay men to sign up to the Anthony Nolan bone marrow register

WORDS JOHN MARRS IMAGES ALEX GRIFFITHS







BACK IN 2006 WHEN I WAS

17-years-old, my aunt was involved in a campaign to find bone marrow for a young mixed-race boy who had leukemia. Unfortunately they couldn't find a donor in time.

Before she became involved, I knew absolutely nothing about bone marrow and donations, and I didn't realise there was a specific need for people who were mixed-race.

However, I knew about the restrictions on gay men donating blood and I found that frustrating. So I approached Anthony Nolan a little bit cautiously for that reason, but they were very up front and inviting, and clear from the offset that sexuality had absolutely no bearing on your eligibility to donate, which was quite refreshing.

That encouraged me to get involved. As well as being gay, I'm also mixed-race, and the chances of finding a donor if you're mixed-race are a lot worse than if you're Caucasian. That's because of a combination of things, like there aren't enough donors from African and Caribbean backgrounds and you're more likely to have a rare tissue type.

Once I signed up to go on the register, I spat in a tube and was asked questions and my details put onto a register. So if somebody came up who needs a donor and has a similar tissue type as me, Anthony Nolan will ask if I'd like to be considered to donate bone marrow to them.

I left them various contact details and went about my life, and then three years ago I was contacted to get further testing for somebody who needed my bone marrow. I

was a match for this person, but for whatever reason it didn't go ahead. But Anthony Nolan now knew my exact tissue type.

Then a year ago I got a voicemail message from Anthony Nolan, which was a bit of a surprise as the register wasn't at the forefront of my mind. I hadn't forgotten about it though, and it was an exciting feeling to be contacted and quite overwhelming, because you're intrinsically linked to this person through your tissue type, despite not knowing who they are. Instantly I had an image in my head of someone who was gravely ill and who'd gone right to the end of the line, exhausting all other processes

Wouldn't it be awesome if we could become known as selfless superheroes that've improved the prospects of those living with blood cancer?

and who was now in desperate need of a bone marrow transplant.

And of course, I felt a little bit of trepidation and anxiety over what the process might be like, but then I remembered this would be the most important thing I could ever do for another person.

In my case, which is only about 10% of cases, I was asked if I would mind giving my bone marrow through a procedure called bone marrow harvest – and I readily agreed. I donated in this way because it was decided it was the best for my recipient; but nine times out of ten the procedure of donating is similar to giving blood.

Once checked I was fit for surgery, I went to a private hospital and it was all very quick as they want to use up as little of your time as possible. There are scans and tests and a doctor – who in my case was also a gay man on the register – spoke for a good 90 minutes about what the process would be like, and asked for any concerns I might have and to make sure I'd thought it through.

A date was set for me and the person I was donating to. They have to be in sync, as it's important my bone marrow is put into them as quickly as possible, as the cells only have a 72 hour lifespan once outside the body. I went into hospital the night before, then had surgery in the morning, and was put under a general anaesthetic so I didn't feel a thing.

The surgeon uses a needle which goes into your hip to extract bone marrow, and they also go into a few small spots just above your hip. They're all a little sore when you wake up, but they're no more painful than a bruise. I stayed in hospital for another night before being sent home with some painkillers, which I only took for a couple of days.

Over the following week I felt a little tired as I didn't have a very high blood cell count, so it's difficult for your body to pump oxygen around, but that naturally returns over the next couple of weeks. Within seven days I was back at work, feeling fine.

I know I've donated my bone marrow to an adult woman and that's as much as I've been told. After two years, if we both agree, then we can meet each other. But she's sent me a thank you card expressing her gratitude and telling me she's now on the road to recovery. It's really nice to know I've been able to help someone prolong their life.

After I donated my bone marrow, word spread among my friends, and I was stunned by the response from my peers. I found that lots of gay men



assumed they couldn't donate due to their sexuality. This is wrong – and since young men make the best donors, it felt like a terrible waste. What if they were the one person that could cure someone of blood cancer, but they never joined the register? I felt compelled to spread the message; we need more young gay role models to sign up to the Anthony Nolan register and save lives.

Only 15% of people on the Anthony Nolan register are young men aged 16 to 30, and it's in our power to change this. Worryingly, I've had messages from a few gay people saying, 'If my blood's not good enough they're not getting anything else from me' – and that's really disappointing. The people who're missing out with that attitude are people who're really sick. It's doubly important you take ownership of your ability to help and do something like this or find some other positive way to have an impact.

If the gay community can get behind this, we can have a really positive impact and drastically increase the number of people who're cured of blood cancer. Many gay men strive to provide role models for our community, so wouldn't it be awesome if we could become known as a group of selfless superheroes that've improved the prospects of those living with blood cancer?

We can achieve this just by signing up to the Anthony Nolan register and encouraging all our gay friends to do so. As far as I see, there's absolutely no downside to it. ■

If you're aged 16-30 you can join the Anthony Nolan register at anthonymolan.org



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GT



“ **Those late night**
cryptic tweets and
Facebook posts;

we've all been there, right? The witching hour, when those of us who feel especially low, lonely, out of sorts, and ache for some way to just get it all out of our system, to vent our spleens and throw it out into the world of late night social media, where the lonely and restless creep. Goodness knows I have.

I always say that social media is no place to talk about such things – and I should practice what I preach. Because not only have I been guilty of it, but I've also learnt that a retweet, or a hairy-arsed profile pic, saying 'You OK babes?' isn't the greatest comfort for it.

Being so accessible to the world even in the middle of the night is, sometimes, just too hard to resist. Some psychologists even recommend it and say that venting online is good for us. But trust me, these guys are talking out of their arses.

If you need to vent properly, 140 characters won't do it, and no one wants to read a biblical rant on

Facebook. Why not try writing it down properly? Or better still, dust off the contacts section of your phone and actually speak to someone you know will hear you.

I spend a lot of time alone. More time than I care to admit. My social life is lightweight and fragmented and my true friends are few. I'm quickly learning that this just comes with the territory of being a grown-up. There's work to be done, bills to be paid and goals to be lived out.

And like the majority, I'm completely addicted to social media. Even when I don't tweet, I'm still there all the time, twitching my Twitter curtains and watching on as each new newsworthy witch gets burnt daily for saying something mean.

I actually think it can feel just as lonely on social media as it can in real life. I mean, who are you if you write something witty and nobody answers you? You may as well be talking to yourself. It's all the same kind of playground scenario; the cool kids, the popular kids, the geeks, the jocks, the weirdos – that's

**There
are some
things
that your
Twitter
followers
can't
provide for
you that
your real
life friends
can; they
know the
best and
worst of
you**

@thatbloodymikey

me – the gym freaks, the catfish, the obsessed, and of course, the completely insane.

As different as we all approach social media though, we all have something in common. We all have our days when we feel vulnerable, insecure, depressed and need to be filtered in selfies, retweeted in jokes, creative in our words, and yes, even validated as people. Sometimes. Anyone that tells you that they don't is lying.

Social media is, in the end, a great way to meet new people, have some great banter and – let's not forget – promote your amazing shit.

But there are some things that your Twitter followers can't provide for you that your real life friends can; they know the best and worst of you, the unfiltered you, the you that doesn't need to come with witty comments, or a GIF of RuPaul slapping a bitch.

And more importantly, they're there to put their arms around you and hold you and hug you and tell you that you're going to be OK when you need to hear it, anytime you want to hear it.

There's no better feeling than that.

As addictive and life consuming as it all is, I've made a pact with my equally addicted pals, to have TWO NIGHTS a week completely Twitter free and to actually see each other! I know right? How very 90s of us.

I know WhatsApp and FaceTime are handy tools, but damn it, as the great Bob Hoskins once said, it's fucking good to talk. F-word added there for extra weight.

I know what a bitch loneliness is. Believe me, I get you on that one. But please, don't depend only on the internet to help you feel better. Pick up the phone and call someone who gives a damn about you.

It beats a faceless profile in the sea of social media any day. ■



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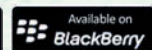
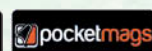
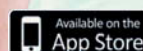
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“ ‘Michael,’ came the mysterious voice on the other end of the line. ‘It’s Abdul.’ And then, sensing I had no idea who this was, he added, ‘From prison.’

I thought, ‘what the fuck?’

Obviously it was some guy I’d met while ‘away.’ But that could’ve been anyone! I’m normally a very amiable person. I say please and thank you. It created drama, especially in prison. People would often take advantage of someone they believed was decent. I can’t tell you how many times I was robbed after lending someone a jar of coffee or sugar, only to be told, ‘I’m not paying you back, bitch. What you gonna do about it?’ How was I going to get rid of this guy?

And then it hit me. Of course! Abdul! My neighbour from Elmira Correctional Facility!

Abdul, you see, was quite memorable. A humble, polite guy. One of the few – and I mean few – Muslims who didn’t want to, you know, kill me.

It’s sort of funny, how we became friends. Abdul was a bit standoffish when he first moved in next door.

Cautious, you could say. This was actually quite common among the Muslim population. Muslims, mostly, shared an intense dislike – they didn’t ‘get’ me. They were disgusted by my sense of ‘humour.’ The night Abdul moved in next to me, as a little joke, I knocked on his wall asking to borrow a pencil as I needed to draw something for one of my paintings. He reached around and handed it to me and then – and here’s the ‘joke’ part – I whispered, ‘Thanks. Now do you have a plastic bag and a jar of Vaseline?’ He refused to even LOOK at me for three days. Abdul was what you’d call ‘straight edge’: no drugs, no booze, no fun.

About a month after my Vaseline joke, I was showing him photos of some of my friends, including one of a beautiful girl named Chanel, who he fell instantly in love with. This got him to talk to me.

One thing led to another and by the end of the night I’d done what I always do when I meet straight edge, homophobic, standoffish Muslims – I gave him four Percocets and a pint of jailhouse wine. Ten minutes later Abdul said,

I poked my head around and saw poor Abdul sitting on the floor in a puddle of puke, looking confused. I was afraid he’d accuse me of trying to poison – or even kill – him

‘It ain’t workin’. Gimme more.’

‘I wouldn’t do that,’ I cautioned. Sometimes I can administer drugs to newbies carefully and responsibly. ‘It’s your first time. Give it another ten minutes.’

‘Listen. Maybe four pills work for you but I weigh 200 pounds. Gimme more.’

What else could I do? I gave Abdul two more pills, then sat on my bed watching Seinfeld and eating barbecue potato chips.

Minutes later I heard a sudden CRASH! BOOM! coming from Abdul’s cell... I poked my head around and saw poor Abdul sitting on the floor in a puddle of puke, holding his head and looking confused. He’d either fainted, or vomited and then fainted. I was afraid he’d accuse me of trying to poison – or even kill – him.

But Abdul wore a grin as he mopped up the puke. And when his cell was clean he asked for a sheet of paper. Confused, I handed it over and watched him sit on his bed and write the following note:

‘Dear Michael, I used to think of people like you as freaks. You were all sinners, going to hell. And I didn’t give a fuck. Now I feel differently. You and your friends aren’t freaks. You’re fabulous, and I’d like to learn how to be fabulous like you. When we go home I would like to stay in contact. Love, Abdul.’

It was touching. This guy, with 30 years in prison for killing someone – he’d been in already nearly 29 – was always so positive, optimistic. You might say, ‘Well you doped him up with narcotics, you probably could’ve had him sucking your dick!’ But I refuse to accept such cynical posturing!

I choose to believe there’s a bit of fabulousity just waiting to be dragged out of all of us.

And if some of us need six Percocets and a pint of jailhouse hooch to bring it to the surface, who am I to judge? ■

@alig_aligula



Can I trust my bi boyfriend?

It's come to light recently that my boyfriend is actually bi. We've been dating for a few months and I thought he was 'the one'. He didn't tell me he was bi until I met some of his friends and heard them talking about one of his exes, who was a girl. When I confronted him later, he confessed he was bisexual, but had been out with more men than women. I was really annoyed he hadn't told me when we first started dating, but he said he was worried about my reaction because it can put people off.

It feels like he's been dishonest and I'm not sure how I feel about

him now. How can I be sure he won't go off with a girl behind my back and how do I know there aren't other skeletons in his closet that I'm yet to find out about? I don't know if I can trust him any more. Ivor, by email

The Guyliner replies I'm no scientist, but I've yet to see any clear evidence bisexual people are more likely to be unfaithful than those who stick to one lane. And as for "dishonest" and "skeletons" – come on. You're gay; surely you get why this way of thinking is poisonous and rather unfortunately proves your boyfriend's point. Years of prejudice and bi-erasure have no doubt taught your guy it's best to keep quiet about his sexuality because of the mistrust and suspicion it creates. Imagine what that feels like. Horrid, right? Right.

Your trust issues would be justified if he'd lied to you about who he was, but he merely left something out. Hopefully, you can understand why he did that. When you're gay, you never stop coming out; it happens day after day with almost everyone you meet. It's the same when you're bi, except you're more likely to encounter bewilderment or extra prejudice. As you've shown. You can't blame him for wanting to save all that palaver for another day. Does it mean he's keeping other things from you? If you're prone to this reaction when you discover he's had sex with women, I imagine he's not going to confide much else. That doesn't make him a bad person – he needs your help, and your trust.

The idea a bisexual person is more likely to cheat is ridiculous. It's a common misconception that just because bi guys have more options, in a way, they're more predisposed to adultery. This is insulting and unfair. They don't have Sellotape on their fingers, nor magnetic thighs – no man or woman ever heard there was a bisexual person in the room and dropped everything to try to get off with them.

Did you think your boyfriend was "the one" because he made you feel amazing, or because he had a sexual history you could relate to? I don't care who my boyfriend has boned in the past – he's with me now.

Your boyfriend may well leave you for a woman one day, but he may also ditch you for a man. Are you doing everything you can to ensure that doesn't happen? Open your mind, not to mention your heart, and accept him for who he is. Love him in the moment instead of obsessing over his past. I'd say that'd be a good way to start. ■

@theguyliner

need advice?

Need some good old-fashioned advice on matters of love, life or relationships? Email me in total confidence on theguyliner@gaytimes.co.uk. I can't respond individually and your emails may be edited for use in the magazine. We won't use your real name or publish any contact details.



ALL THE MEN YOU SHOULD NEVER DATE

[01] The Brand Something weird happens to some men once their follower count gets a few extra noughts on it, doesn't it? It starts off barely noticeable – maybe he's taking a bit longer in the mirror before posting a selfie – but before you know it, he's referring to himself in the third person like Jordan does when she's droning, "Never underestimate the Pricey." To The Brand, social media isn't just about documenting the day-to-day or, just being alive; it's a PR machine. He can put a positive spin on just about any aspect of his existence and thinks, sometimes correctly, that there are hungry hordes out there desperate to know his next move. Other signs he may be getting too big for his boots include tweeting quotes of things he himself said only days before, printing out T-shirts with his own catchphrases and refusing to go to certain bars or restaurants because they're "off-message" or "not a true reflection of his brand." You think I'm joking, I know, but this is a real thing. So why is this a problem for you, you might wonder. You like big names so what's the harm in a little bit of extended brand loyalty? As any brand ambassador will tell you, everything you do reflects on the marque you represent, and you may find your own life controlled by the brand – even if you don't get the benefits. Where you go, what you do, how you dress, the pictures you publish – none of it belongs to you any more. Unless he says so. "Just to let you know," he'll say as you set off for your brother's wedding, "I'll let you have today for your Twitter. I'm not going to be pushing it

out on my channels." You're dating an egomaniac in aussieBums.

The solution How do you topple a big brand? Why, you build your own empire, baby! Ramp up your Instagram and pursue ersatz celebrity with the most unquenchable thirst this side of the Sahara. Or, you know, just ditch him and go out with a normal person. ■

[02] The Boyfsplainer One of the great things about being in a relationship is learning from one another. Having access to another person's brain day in and day out means every day is a school day, and it's largely brilliant. Imagine being able to pass off your other half's zingers as your own, or surprise all your friends with your sudden, inexplicable knowledge of Eurovision. The only trouble is that sometimes, one half of the couple enjoys teaching more than they like learning. The Boyfsplainer assumes that your brain is slowly turning to cotton wool, and so will needlessly tell you things you already knew – you may even have alerted him to them yourself – in an effort to make him look the more clued up of the two. He's not just a know-it-all, he's an explain-it-all. Menus, timetables, how train tickets work, news stories of the day and, of course, the show-off's ultimate prize, grammar rules – all coming your way in granular detail. And why is it every piece of "friendly advice" he gives you feels like a lecture?

The solution Play dumb as long as you can bear it or, preferably, get smart and show just how clever your dick can be, by taking it somewhere else. ■

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**“NATURAL-LOOKING
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“LOOKING 7 YEARS YOUNGER”

MICHAEL ★★★★★



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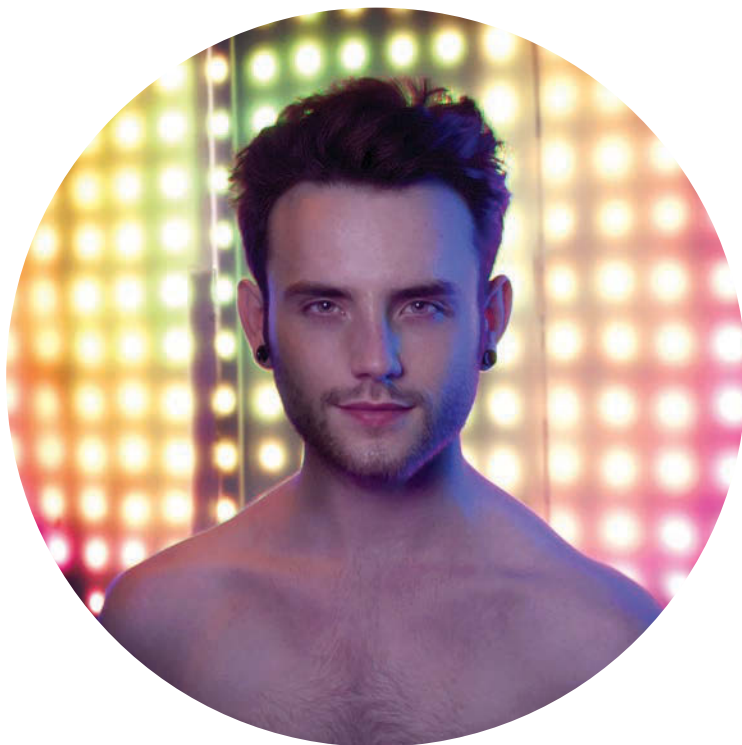


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“ Our families are perhaps the most influential factors on our lives. Everything from the way we speak, dress and even think originates in some way from the people we call our closest loved ones.

Unfortunately nothing is perfect, and I'm sure if anyone typed the words 'gay' and 'family' into Google, they'd find an abundance of stories about the saddening rejection many LGBT people face when coming out to their family. I know many who've been rejected, disowned and completely air-brushed out of the picturesque family portrait that many still rely on.

I came out at 13-years-old. Not through choice, but because the threat of someone telling an entire high school seemed too daunting for me to remain passive.

I told everyone. Teachers, students, dinner ladies, everyone. I was in control and it felt brilliant. A split lip and a broken nose followed in the subsequent two years, as I remained an outsider to many, but I was carried through by

the support of a select few whom I treasured. It wasn't easy being the short, skinny, emo kid with a black sweeping fringe across a face full of piercings. Being openly gay was something of a catalyst.

My family, on the other hand, were very supportive, and treated me no differently upon acquiring the knowledge that they'd long suspected. I'm sure that most reading this have a story to tell all of their own, but I always looked upon 'coming out' as perhaps the worst case of intimate disclosure I'd have to endure. How foolish.

Two years ago I received my HIV diagnosis. Jobless, 18, steering towards the edge of a cliff regarding the ways I made money and subsequently spent it, squandered on a lifestyle that was quickly becoming an unfortunate destiny. I realised soon after my diagnosis that coming out, for me, would be a walk in the park compared to the reactions I had to witness as I told my family that I was HIV-positive. I didn't cry when I was told I had HIV, but I became inconsolable when I thought I'd have to tell my mum.

I realised after my diagnosis that coming out as gay, for me, would be a walk in the park compared to the reactions as I told my family I was HIV-positive

The phone call was horrific. You couldn't even make out her words through the heart-wrenching sound of internal screams and external tears, her colleagues wouldn't even let her drive home from work until she'd calmed down. Whereas I was sitting on a train platform in a chilling state of shock that seemed to last days, just hoping that anyone I told wouldn't write me off as someone no longer worthy of a place in their lives.

The person I least expected to react excessively was my younger brother; 16 at the time, so laid-back you could tell him it was Armageddon and he'd just light up a cigarette and say 'fuck it'. Apparently not that day – it was the morning of his last GCSE exam and upon hearing the news from my mum, he vented his anger by punching his bedroom wall until his fists bled. 'I'm not FUCKING going to the FUCKING exam!' were the only words I could hear from afar, thinking of a way to amend the situation. His school gave him extra time and he sat it late in a private room.

My nan expressed nothing but quiet rage as I told her. Possibly the worst memory of my teens belong to those five minutes of silence, before a hug would go on to pause our tears. I'll never forget that day. But how could I?

When people bring that day into conversation, they always ask about the clinic, who told me, how I reacted – but in all truth, that trip to the clinic was a million times easier to endure than the long hours that followed. I tell those I know to remember this story – as even when a HIV diagnosis seems so daunting and unbearable to the person, we should all remember the families of those affected.

Your closest support, if you're lucky enough to have them in your lives, are always the people you never call by name. ■

@positiveluke



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“ I was in my acting class a few weeks ago and, as usual, we were all updating the class at large on things happening in our lives. So things went along the lines of, ‘Yesterday I had an audition for AT&T and I think it went well.’ Then we’d applaud and move on.

Two of my transgender classmates were missing and our teacher, Brad, had the tea – both were on flights to different parts of the country to film network pilots. Immediately after, we watched a trailer for a new Wachowski/Netflix show, *Sense8*, which featured another transgender classmate, Jamie Clayton, as one of the leads. There was no denying it – the shift in public perception was real and these ladies were ready to make the most of it.

And, yes, of course I was jealous, but only in the sense that I wanted desperately to be doing the same thing as them; to join them, really. On the way home that day, a headline told me of a record number of reported LGBT homicides in the US for 2015. And then Caitlyn Jenner’s picture came

out about a day later. My head was in a tizzy. How could we be living in a world where all of this was happening at the same time? But we do. I can’t really speak for the transgender movement, nor should I, being a white cis-gendered male, but I can lament the progress of the gay movement in comparison.

This might sound ridiculous to some, but the gay rights movement isn’t as profound. We want to assimilate; we don’t want to be our embodied selves alongside heterosexuals, we want to fit in. Because ours is a difference that isn’t immediately apparent to those around us. Unlike race or gender identity, sexual orientation is a translucent sheen that marks us internally, but leaves the shell unscathed. In other words, we can almost get away with it.

The bravery of the transgender movement is the insistence that their acceptance won’t happen in the shadows, and it won’t only happen with those within their community who convincingly ‘pass’. Laverne Cox warned of this while commenting on Caitlyn’s Vanity Fair cover. ‘There are many

A headline told me of a record number of reported LGBT homicides in the US. And then Caitlyn Jenner’s picture came out. How could all of this be happening at the same time?

@peejaybrennan

trans folks because of genetics and/or lack of material access who’ll never be able to embody [cisnormative beauty standards]... We should be seen as ourselves and respected as ourselves,’ she posted on Tumblr shortly after the cover was released.

‘Respected as ourselves.’ I’m not so sure the gay movement is focused on the same thing. We’re still in the murky battle of having heterosexuals win awards for playing us on the big screen, while actual gay men are relegated to the fairy queen sidekicks bordering on pantomime. When are we demanding that we be respected as ourselves? What are we really trying to do, anyway? Be us or be them in our clothing?

Every time I leave my class I remind myself that my transgender classmates wake up and pursue a career where the gaze of others is kind of crucial. The gaze is also a weapon for many transphobic people. It’s a dangerous place to be in. By contrast, I walk into an audition and hope that I won’t lift a pinky or flick my wrist, stereotypical signs of my gayness. How trite of me. How cowardly.

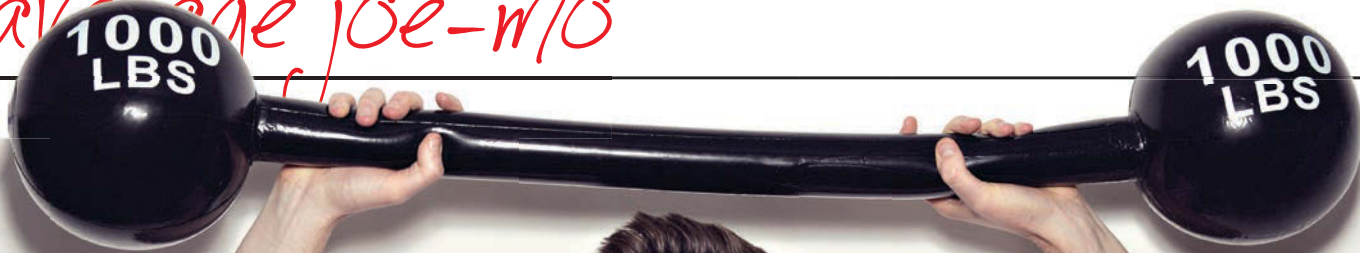
The bravery of my classmates is paying off and it provides a very valuable lesson for me and for the gay community at large. Stop waiting for others to deem you valuable and begin to value yourself. Every other motherfucker on this planet will come around eventually, and if they don’t, that’s their loss.

Laverne Cox made the cover of Time magazine because she has a razor sharp idea of who she is and that alone is compelling. The transgender movement isn’t gaining momentum because they’re trying to fit it. It’s gaining momentum because the rest of us are slowly but surely seeing them for who they are – valuable and worthy individuals. ■



[life]

average joe-mo



**FEEL
GOOD**

WORDS CHRIS JONES IMAGE SNOOTY FOX IMAGES

need advice?

Whether you're wanting to look good on the beach, shed a few pounds or just live a healthier lifestyle, email me on fitness@gaytimes.co.uk or tweet me at [@chrisjonesgeek](https://twitter.com/chrisjonesgeek). I can't respond to everyone and your emails or tweets may be edited for use in the magazine. We won't publish any contact details.

The fitness magazines have gone into full force with their summertime slogans – and the one that resonates the most with me is, ‘How to get a beach body in six weeks.’

First, we have to be philosophical for a moment and ask ourselves what exactly IS a beach body? And what does it mean to us? To a huge number of men it's looking like a ripped Adonis. To a lot more men, I'm sure it's just being comfortable within our own skin with our tops off while on holiday.

If you already look sort of good, then one of the how-to-grate-cheese-off-your-washboard-abs guides would probably achieve some happy results. But if you like a beer and a burger, like me, then we've got to work a bit harder to get the results we want. And what is that result? To be confident and comfortable with how we look. Yeah? YEAH!

So may I present to you, my FOUR week better-body-because-it's-nice-to-feel-good-about-yourself plan. This plan will consist of the same all body work out, three times a week for four weeks. And if you don't see results – and more importantly feel GOOD about YOURSELF – then I will eat this magazine! There's surely a low carb version, right?

All you have to do is one set of ten reps per exercise. But try doing

this at a weight that's not ‘killer heavy’ – but comfortably heavy. Too light? Then do it again, but heavier. Before each exercise, perform five reps at half the intended weight so you warm your muscles up. The exercises include:

Chest Bench Press – Lying on the bench with dumbbells or a barbell in your hands, push the weight away from your chest and bring back down again.

Arms Hammer Curls – Hold dumbbells in both hands and make them face your torso. Lift them up at a right angle position and down again.

Tricep Pushdown – Using the cable machine in the gym, use a rope attachment, stand with your legs shoulder width apart and pull the rope toward your stomach, slowly.

Squats Start off by standing using two dumbbells, but preferably a barbell across your back on your shoulders. Lower yourself into an almost a sitting position, so your thighs are nearly parallel with the floor. Then, back to the start position.

Back Lat Pulldown – there's normally a machine for this in every gym. Using the long bar attached to the pull-down machine. Reach up and grab the bar and slowly pull until it almost touches the back of your neck, hold and slowly raise again.

If unsure about any exercise, do consult the gym staff present. ■



[ask chris]

Question I'm working out a lot at the moment with a weight training and cardio routine. I've been doing it for a few months now, but I'm just not seeing any results. It's just making

me feel tired all the time. Can you suggest anything? Tom, via email

Answer Try switching your diet around. It sounds like your body isn't properly fuelled and therefore you're burning up all your intake straight away. The tiredness could be a lack of carbs, which people too readily shy away from. Maybe try introducing them back to your diet – in moderation. ■

Chris' exercise of the month

biceps

If you're after big biceps then look no further than the Bicep Curl. A famed and simple exercise that can be performed easily with dumbbells or anything easy to grip, like the big bottles of water you find in supermarkets!

[01] Stand up straight with a dumbbell in each hand at arm's length. Keep your elbows close to your torso and rotate the palms of your hands until they're facing forward.

[02] Now, keeping the upper arms

stationary, exhale and curl the weights while contracting your biceps. Continue to raise the weights until your biceps are fully contracted and the dumbbells are at shoulder level. Hold this position and then lower slowly.



BodySpace by Bodybuilding.com
I use this app religiously. You can sign up and create a Facebook-like page where you record all your fitness results and set your goals. It emails you with weekly summaries of what you achieved that week and also has a database on all the exercises you could ever want. ■

[01] Structure Make sure to check that the building itself is structurally sound. It may sound obvious, but it's easy to get swept up in the property viewing process. Keep an eye out for large cracks, particularly where building extensions join onto the main house and around windows – especially bay windows. It's definitely worthwhile checking around the exterior of the property as well, even if your estate agent is intent on ushering you out as quickly as possible. Check for missing roof tiles and look at the general condition of the roof. And ask how old it is, as replacing roofs can be a costly business. Use your nose as well when you're checking for damp – signs include flaky plaster, watermarked ceilings and walls, and a musty odour. An

extra tip would be to watch out for fresh paint, as this can be used to disguise damp.

[02] Face During cloudy days, nighttime or winter months, it can be difficult to tell the difference between a north and south facing property. South facing properties are known for getting more sunlight during the day, and are therefore brighter and warmer, whereas north facing properties are typically cooler and darker. If you haven't been told which direction the house you're viewing is facing, you can always ask – or use a compass app on your phone. If you're a bit of a green thumb and pride yourself on your garden, this may be especially important to you, as you don't want your plants dying due to insufficient sunlight.

[03] Space One valuable asset that buyers often forget to look at when viewing properties is storage space. Where would you keep your Hoover, spare towels and those boxes full of stuff that you've hoarded for years? Make sure you keep this in mind while you're planning your future. As well as looking for cupboards and shelves, make sure you ask about the attic. How big is it? How easy is it to access? Could it possibly be converted into another room? Also ask yourself whether you've been fooled by strategically placed mirrors and clever lighting – tricks homeowners will often use to make rooms feel much larger than they actually are. In this particular scenario, size really does matter.

[04] Electrics and plumbing

Check for plug sockets and make a mental note of what condition they're in. Is rewiring your new home really the first thing you want to do once you move in? You can't know whether the lights or electrics work unless you either try them out or ask the property's current owner. The plumbing is something else you may want to look into – try running the taps for an indication of the water pressure, ask how old the boiler is and see whether the radiators are fully functioning.

[05] Location Spend time exploring the general local area to see how close you are to all of the essentials, such as schools, supermarkets and transport links. You may also want to figure out how long it's going to take you to do your daily commute. Other things to consider are whether you are next to a busy road or train tracks that will keep you awake at night, or how close to the local pub you are – do you really want to be woken up at 2am by rowdy locals stumbling to the kebab shop? ■

You've finally saved up enough money to start looking for your own place. You've started decorating in your head and have even selected the perfect paint colour swatches. But before you rush into anything, here's a few helpful tips when viewing a property for the first time

WORDS CHRIS MCPARLAN





Face carpets and chest rugs have been big news in men's styling for a while – and now it's time for your floors to be just as heavily carpeted as those trendy tattooed hipsters.

After being inspired by the incredible patterned carpets on display in Milan earlier this year, we haven't been able to stop thinking about them. Maybe it's because we're currently living in a draughty renovation project with creaky floorboards, but we're definitely craving carpet underfoot. The bolder the better.

We wanted to explore what Britain has to offer in the way of furry flooring. Turns out us Brits are world leaders and Brintons, based in the West Midlands, have been leading the way for hundreds of years. They not only supply the Queen, but also the White House. How lovely then to get the chance to take a tour around their factory and see the finest British craftsmanship in process.

First we noticed the sheer scale of the industry that's still going strong in Kidderminster,

the spiritual home of carpet. We were made to put on some very bizarre rubber footwear and some very friendly staff showed us the inner sanctums. It was like going to visit Wonka's chocolate factory. We half expected to see Oompa Loompas threading yarn inside the secret building. We were even told that there were protected areas in the factory where we couldn't take photos, because the technology is so new they can't let the prying eyes of the world's competitors see. All very Roald Dahl – and all the better for it!

What really blew our minds was the complexity of each element and the use of both ancient equipment with the most cutting edge technology. At the end of the factory tour we met the ladies who check every inch of carpet before it's finished by hand with an actual needle and a pair of scissors. These ladies truly are carpet champions.

Needless to say, we should all be using British carpets. Join the carpet crusade! ■



[01]



[02]



[03]



[04]

01-02 Brintons, brintons.co.uk
03-04 Dimore studio, dimorestudio.eu

Green leaves, fresh grass and relaxing times. Bring the natural feeling of being outdoors back inside with you. Summertime can last all year long...

WORDS MARK KING



[01]



[02]



[03]

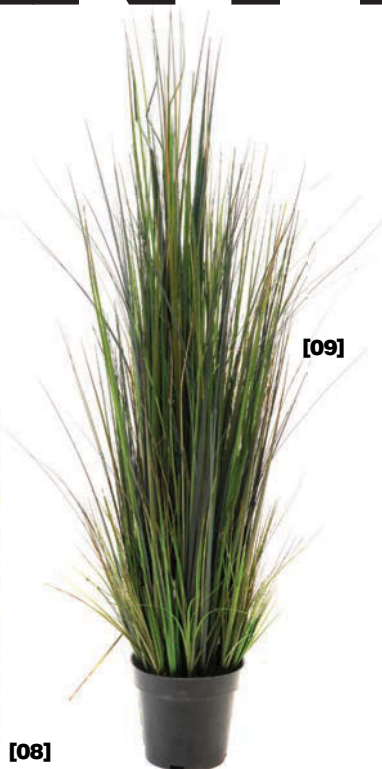


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GREEN PEACE



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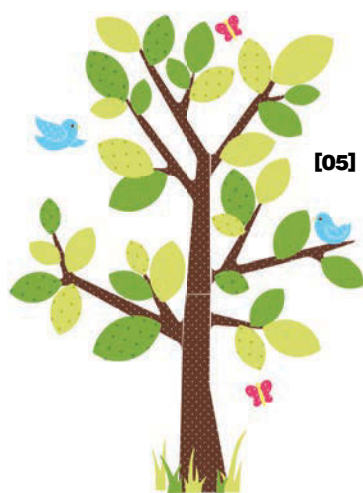


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[11]

01 The cut grass candle

Enjoy 40 hours of one of the best fragrances without having to mow the lawn. Fresh Cut Grass Scented Candle, £20.00, sophieallport.com

02 The tropical cushion

Lie down and hold over your eyes to simulate that hammock on the perfect beach. Palm Leaves Cushion, £8, tesco.com

03 The retro lamp

Hand-crafted with a sharp 70s design. Comes with a choice of base. Woodland table lamp, £80, hunkydoryhome.co.uk

04 The charming chair

Plush comfort upholstered in a Designers Guild fabric, new for summer 2015. Tango Chair by Ian Archer for Archer & Co, £1,100, couchdesign.co.uk

05 The pop art tree

Meant to be for the kids, but steal it from them. Just peel and reapply. Kids Tree Wall Stickers, £25, beckyandlolo.co.uk

06 The plate lawn

Ditch the drying and enjoy the outdoors as your dishes drain on their own patch of grass. My Garden Dish Drainer, £22.99, thegiftoasis.com

07 The dappled light

Bring the relaxing effect of light filtering through foliage indoors with this clustered leaf shade. Orlando Pendant Lamp, £156, in-spaces.com

08 The leaf rug

Contemporary printed foliage paired with classic 100% wool Axminster. Kaleidoscope Hortus, from £815, frithrugs.co.uk

09 The grass pot

Switch on the fan and enjoy the rustle of river grass with this contemporary fake take. Artificial river grass, £25.99, chelseagardener.com

10 The green screen

Beautifully elegant screen to relax behind and dream about summer on your chaise longue. Arthouse Wisteria Teal Screen, £85, arthouse.com

11 The original

It's hard to beat the real thing. Enjoy this fresh lemon-scented evergreen in your conservatory all year round. Lemon tree, from £55, treesdirect.co.uk



CLEAN & SERENE

Mother nature is a clever lady. For every man-made chemical we use to clean our homes, she has a better, kinder alternative. Common Good have worked with green chemists to produce plant and mineral based formulas that are biodegradable, cruelty-free and refillable to cut waste. From bathroom cleaner that uses lactic acid to polish your porcelain, to hand soap that kills 99% of germs using essential oils – the range is as good at doing its job as it is caring for the planet. ■

Common Good, from £11, anothercountry.com





If you forget about what is actually in this cake, effectively a lot of cream cheese, this dessert is actually quite light. Well, it tastes light at least! It also makes a great summertime dessert, perfect for a BBQ and, even better, it's very simple to put together



Lime Cheesecake

Base

200g digestive biscuits
75g unsalted butter, melted

Filling

450g cream cheese
225g caster sugar
1/2 tbsp plain flour
2 large eggs
1tsp vanilla bean paste
Zest of 1 lime

Topping

175g sour cream
1 tbsp caster sugar
1 tbsp vanilla bean paste

Preheat the oven to 150°C or 300°F. To make the cheesecake base, place the biscuits in a sandwich bag and seal. Use a rolling pin to crush them into fine crumbs, tip into a bowl and pour in the melted butter stirring together until evenly combined. Tip the base mixture into a nine-inch pie plate and compact with your hand, covering the base and sides of the tin evenly. Place into the fridge while you make the filling. Place the cream cheese, sugar and lime zest into a large bowl and, using an electric mixer, beat briefly until evenly combined. Add the eggs and the vanilla and beat until the cheesecake mixture is smooth. Pour this into the chilled base and



bake in the preheated oven for 40-45 minutes, or until the mixture has set around the edges but still has a little wobble in the middle. Remove from the oven and allow to cool for 20 minutes. While cooling, make the topping by mixing together the sour cream, sugar and vanilla. Once chilled, spread the topping over the cheesecake and place back into the oven for ten minutes. Allow to cool to room temperature before chilling in the fridge for a few hours. Grating over a little extra lime zest to decorate. ■

Author of *The Boy Who Bakes*, *Say It With Cake* and *Patisserie Made Simple*, @theboywhobakes



Arctic Clarity

The joy of recently celebrating World Gin Day – yes, that's a thing – brought with it another reason to celebrate.

We discovered that Amazon sell gin! They sell other tipples, too, but our love of a tot of mother's ruin combined with our love of all things Icelandic meant that Martin Miller's collaboration with Arctic Clarity caught our eye first... Still very much like having an old friend popping in. Only this time, via the post. ■

£26, [amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk)



Chicken with garlic, lemon, tarragon and radish

Serves four – or a greedy two

8 free-range chicken thighs, skin off bone in

1 tbsp rapeseed oil

1/2 tbsp sea salt

generous seasoning

1 unwaxed lemon, juice and rind

2 cloves garlic, finely sliced

4-5 stalks of fresh tarragon

200g new potatoes (halved)

A handful of radishes

If you've been working on that summer bod, like us and everyone else, you'll have endured a tough few months of minimal carbs and low fat food. We know it isn't that time yet, but we have to begin to accept it. Summer will soon be over. Not to lament its early death, but naturally as the season draws to a close, autumn and winter are round the corner, chock-full of comforting stodge – but for those still conscious about keeping carbs at bay, this dish is a year-round winner!

One of the most comforting and pleasing meals is simple roast chicken, but while sunning yourself at the lido, or quaffing Pimm's in the park, thoughts are not really turning to a dinner of a full roast chicken. Chicken thighs are inexpensive and full of flavour, and this recipe makes your tastebuds think summer while your tummy craves autumn. Plus, it takes such a short amount of time, so you can sop up every last moment of the long, light-filled evenings.

Preheat the oven to 220°C and prepare the chicken by scoring the flesh twice on the unboned side, as this allows a quick marinade to penetrate in. Place into a bowl with the oil, lemon zest and juice, garlic, tarragon and seasoning then get your hands in the mix, ensuring the chicken is coated thoroughly. Place the chicken into a roasting tin, with the plump, flesh side facing up. Add in the halved new potatoes around the tin then cut up the pre-juiced lemon into quarters and place them between the chicken thighs. Roast for 40 minutes – when the chicken will be bronzed, the lemons become a bit charred and the potatoes are cooked and soft – but mid-way through also pop a smaller roasting tin into the oven to preheat. Simply add the radishes to the smaller tin and cook for about ten minutes. Then when everything is cooked, serve them strewn across the bronzed chicken. Yes, it may sound very peculiar to be eating a radish warm, but believe us, they become softer, less intense in that bitter peppery flavour, and visually they appear like pink jewels among the golden chicken and burnished potatoes. Once everything is cooked, it's ready to get plated up. If there's leftover chicken for lunches or another meal, remove the bones before reheating. ■

Gastro Guys are Patrick Hanlon and Russell Alford. For more visit gastroguys.com, @gastroguys



Bored of Monopoly? ...then poop your way to victory with new game *Seagull Splat*. Full of mischievous fun bound to get your children screaming with laughter. Fill a model seagull full of foam and fly it around coloured towels, watching as players duck and dive trying to miss the poop. Just like a day at Brighton beach, then. But if you're after something a little more action packed, *UFO Alarm* gives your kids the chance to fight with aliens. With extraterrestrials ready to invade, it's up to you and your kids to fend off any aliens with a roll of the dice. ■

Suitable for kids aged 6+, from Toys 'R' Us and Argos, £19.99

THE FIVE TIPS TO THE PERFECT WEDDING VIDEO

It's no surprise that some couples want their wedding documented to be cherished for years to come. We spoke to renowned wedding videographer Jeff Wood to pick up his top tips when getting behind the camera.

[01] Don't shake the camera

Make sure you use the right equipment. If you want to do a dolly shot – buy a dolly! There's little tiny pocket dollies that can sit on top of tripods now. Hold the frame and hold the shot. If it's handheld, there'll be subtle movement in there, but hold it and don't follow the action.

[02] Use music sparingly

When you're editing, don't cut all the audio out and stick some music on top, that's the easy way out. That's why so many professionals do it – because it saves time. But it looks and sounds awful, because you get what we call 'goldfishing' – where you see lips moving but you can't hear what people are saying. Record the audio in the camera and get close to the people you're filming.

[03] Avoid the zoom

Do you ever see a zoom in a film? Ever? If you do, it'll either be something that's pretending to be a documentary, or something from Stanley Kubrick being used to signify and out-of-body experience.

You'll only ever zoom if there's some sort of telepathy going on. But you're not Stanley Kubrick. If you've got a dolly, do a push. A push is completely different, you've got the movement of the room in it. It's not like a false zoom, it's like real movement.

[04] Don't chase the action

Don't be constantly chasing what's going on, or you'll be one step behind. Get yourself in position and wait for the next bit of action to come to you – obviously with prior knowledge. You've got to know what's going to happen and be ready for it – don't go chasing as it's happening.

[05] Keep your style and don't overshoot

Maintain your own element of fun. On the job, work in a way that's quick and fun. As soon as you shoot too much and you've got hours of footage to go through, you're going to be bored of it before you've even started to edit. ■

We spoke to Jeff Woods at the launch of Sony's latest 4K HandyCam, the FDR-AX33, jeffwoodvisuals.com





JOSHUA AND ASHLEY LOVE CONQUERS ALL

“ Well, where do I begin? There's always been a stigma with meeting people online. So on 19 May, 2010, I put that to the test. After a month of us talking on Facebook, I decided to meet a guy called Ashley. What I didn't know then was that he'd later become my husband.

I was nervously waiting at the station for him to arrive. As soon as he did, the butterflies began, but once we were together we just 'clicked' – as if we'd met years before. Two months later, Ashley proposed to me in a quiet park on an evening walk. I couldn't contain the word yes!

Our special day was on 7 August, 2010 – the day before his birthday. The sun was shining and it was just perfect. Walking down the aisle together with all our loved ones watching will be a memory we hold forever. Having someone hold your hand and say the words 'I do' is beyond words. I'm grateful every single day and we're lucky to have the love that we share.

In 2014, England legalised gay marriage and gave us the opportunity to have our previous civil partnership converted to a marriage. On 10 December, 2014, we jumped at the chance and had our conversion that very day. We may have had a long road with LGBT rights, but this shows history will and can be made, and that love will conquer all. I'm so proud that Ashley and I have been a part of it.

Both of us come from large families, so having one of our own is very important to us. We definitely see a future with children – whether that be through IVF, fostering or adoption – and we can't wait for that opportunity. But for now, we have our toy poodle Rolo who we spoil rotten. And he knows it!

All I'd say to anyone looking for love is to remember that time is precious, take chances, and know that 'the one' could be right around the corner. **”**



Sparkle this summer with a fresh new cocktail that's bound to go down a treat with your wedding guests. Perfect to sip as you celebrate the happy couple, Cointreau Fizz is bursting with the natural sweetness and orange notes of the iconic French liqueur brand. Simply fill a glass with ice, add Cointreau, the juice of half a lime – and then top off with sparkling water. Garnish with wedges of lime as you see fit. Oh, and it's only 75 calories, meaning you can sink a second absolutely guilt

free. But drink responsibly, of course. ■

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LETOONIA

TURKEY

WORDS DARREN SCOTT



Enforced relaxation – having to stop working, just to sit in the sun and read a book – there’s nothing quite like it.

But relaxing, and having a memorable holiday, seem to be the driving force for all that work at Letoonia, an all-inclusive resort situated on a private peninsula in Fethiye, Turkey. About an hour’s drive from Dalaman Airport, with a choice of rooms in a main hotel or bungalows nestling up high in a forest of pine trees, private means Letoonia also has its own stretch of coastline – 2km of it, consisting of three separate beaches. One of our very favourite places, that we didn’t actually discover until quite late on in our holiday – such is the size of Letoonia we were still finding new places to explore a week later – was the Dolphin Beach. Located at the far end from the main hotel there’s a moored gazebo, extending out over the sea, with luxurious large



cushioned seats and white gauze blowing gently in a light breeze, offering shade and elegance while you sit looking out over the ocean, sipping several drinks and sinking deeper into your stack of novels.

Hammocks and loungers dot your path to every destination, providing the perfect opportunity to simply put your feet up and take five minutes to, well, do nothing. Sat in just the right touch of shade, in the middle of a beautiful oasis of lush green mountains in the far distance and overlooking a deep blue sea, with those vibrant pine trees punctuating the bright, clear skies – the only cloud on

sport activity aplenty.

In fact, there's a quite substantial list of sporting activities that, as part of Letoonia's all-inclusive package, are free, as is use of the fitness centre. Though quite why you'd want to exert yourself when there's so much relaxing to be had is anyone's guess.

So it's little wonder that our chosen water activity was the Twelve Island Boat Tour, a day-long trip on Letoonia's private boat, with yet more food and drink. Take plenty of sun lotion, a book and maybe some music. It's so tranquil that passengers, thankfully, don't ruin the moments between stops and lunch with

downhearted when you see your yacht return to the marina!

What else can you do when all you have to do is relax? Why not relax some more and get yourself pampered at the spa? We, of course, took full advantage of the massages and pedicures on offer.

And what's that sound we hear? Yes, it's silence. Well, almost. Aside from the odd strange shriek in the distance – we were told it's the resident peacock – there was little that assaulted our eardrums.

It is, as with many such destinations, a family resort. So if the idea of children breaks that tranquility for you, book for later in the season. We went in early October, towards the end of the season, and it was blissfully adult-orientated while we were there. That's not to say that there isn't plenty to do that's aimed at adults only.

There are seven restaurants and nine bars – that we discovered, at least – that open and close at various times throughout the day. We considered trying to discover if it was possible to eat and drink for 24 hours – we're pretty certain it was. Theatre shows of all different varieties form the staple of the evening entertainment, along with beach parties, musical acts dotted throughout the resort and a Moonlight Disco, hosted at the tip of the peninsula and offering a spectacular 360 degree view of Fethiye's Bay.

We were so contented – and full! – that we inevitably called it a night fairly early, enjoying a nightcap and an increasingly competitive bout of card games on our balcony overlooking a pool and the Southern Aegean Sea beyond it.

Should you wish to leave the resort – and really, why would you? – a shuttle boat service will take you to the town of Fethiye for shopping opportunities. You can also tour, by car, the surrounding areas of Fethiye, which is littered

There are slides that drop you into the ocean, as well as giant rafts you can swim out to and bask in the sun like a big, fat contented seal

the horizon is that you'll have to leave eventually.

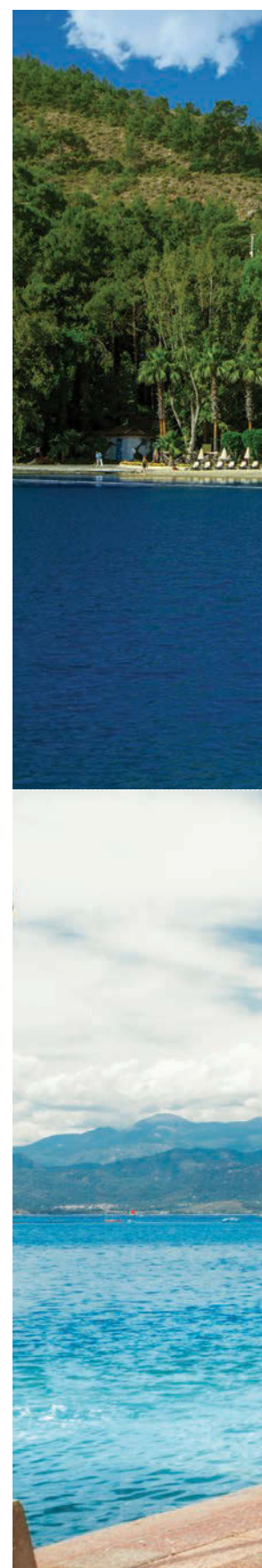
Of course, there are pools aplenty to lounge beside, or indeed in, as and when the mood takes you. When we were there we didn't see any of the 'getting up early and putting a towel on a lounge to reserve it' malarkey you often hear about. In fact, there are so many places to relax that it's a wonder anyone gets anything done.

There are slides that drop you into the ocean, as well as giant rafts you can swim out to and bask in the sun like a big, fat, contented seal. Well, maybe that's just us... And with so much ocean available, it's no surprise that there's also water

banal chatter.

It's the timed stops, in coves and off beautiful beaches, that make the day even more wonderful – diving into water that's various shades of turquoise and blue, with a shimmering silver caused by huge shoals of fish that congregate near the boat, but immediately disperse the moment someone hits the water.

This really can't be recommended highly enough as part of your stay, despite not being part of the inclusive package, at £60 per person – just speak to the brilliant guest relations manager Olga to get booked in. This was a day, in particular, that we just didn't want to end. The hardship of being





with fascinating ruins and tombs. Part of it is a World Heritage Site, and we took a trip to the tombs of Tlos [pronounced Telos], high up in the rock face. As with most of the surrounding areas, these are quite mountainous and there's certainly no health and safety so for goodness sake wear sensible shoes and not flip-flops if you decide to make the climb.

On our travels out of Letoonia, we also visited Saklıkent Gorge – the second largest gorge in Europe. Health and safety has reached these parts, with signage everywhere insisting you wear a helmet – we discover that there's been an accident in the past. That doesn't stop people from jumping into the freezing water and speeding down the gorge. We managed to withstand getting both feet in and having a brief wade.

On our – incredibly scenic – journey back to the luxury and warmth of Letoonia, we had lunch in one of the many fish restaurants that sit above the waterways as you come down from the mountains. A water feature runs the length of the bar – and yes, you pick your lunch direct from here as it swims right past you... Again, the tour – which also takes in Leton and Patara – can be booked at the resort, priced at £150 per person.

Wildlife, of the strictly non-edible variety, is abundant at Letoonia and will often swim right past you. One afternoon journey to lunch was accompanied by a giant turtle swimming alongside us as we walked along a small coastal path. As laid back as we were, it seems everyone's blissfully chilled out at Letoonia, and that's all you need to worry your pretty little head about from the second you arrive. ■

GT stayed at Letoonia Fethiye. Letoonia is open until 6 November, letooniaresorts.com
GT travelled with charterflights.co.uk

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Deadline for next issue 14 July

A STAR FILLED COUNTRY BREAK

WORDS BY NICKY OSBORNE



Make tracks to the countryside from bustling Brighton or London after a hectic week at work, and be charmed by The Star at Alfriston, a timeless village at the foot of the South Downs. With Brighton only half an hour away, and direct frequent train services from nearby Brighton Station to Brighton or London, The Star is the perfect weekend getaway.

From the moment you enter the heavily beamed bar you are travelling back in time. This Grade Two listed inn was originally built to accommodate pilgrims on their travels between Battle and Chichester, and is loaded with character.

The Star Inn combines history and modernity successfully. The main bars have brick and wooden floors, chunky wooden tables and chairs, and not one but three beautiful fireplaces which are roaring in the winter months. Subtle lighting enhances the glow of the fire and creates a perfect ambience, and you can lose yourself for hours as you sample the excellent menu and wine list. A simple, airy yet elegant restaurant is available if you wish for more formal dining to perhaps celebrate an anniversary or birthday, and The Sanctuary offers a quiet cosy room for reading the papers or sampling an after dinner tipple.

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stylish modern bathrooms. The feature bedrooms are a must see; two of which are located in the oldest part of the building and transport you back in time. 'The Smugglers' Lair' bedroom has a handmade 'stock' bed, which whispers indulgence and romance! For the ultimate declaration of love The Star has it all; a bespoke personal service, a variety of packages to suit all tastes and budgets, and a choice of stunning rooms and areas to make your wedding day extra special.

Alfriston itself is a paradise for walkers and cyclists, with the South Downs Way running through the village. Quaint tea shops, an award winning bookshop and elegant boutiques provide interesting retail opportunities.

So, what are you waiting for? Surprise your loved one, grab your overnight bag, and escape to the country. As a tonic for all the rush and stress of modern life and living, treat yourself to this country retreat nestled in the Cuckmere Valley and don't delay.

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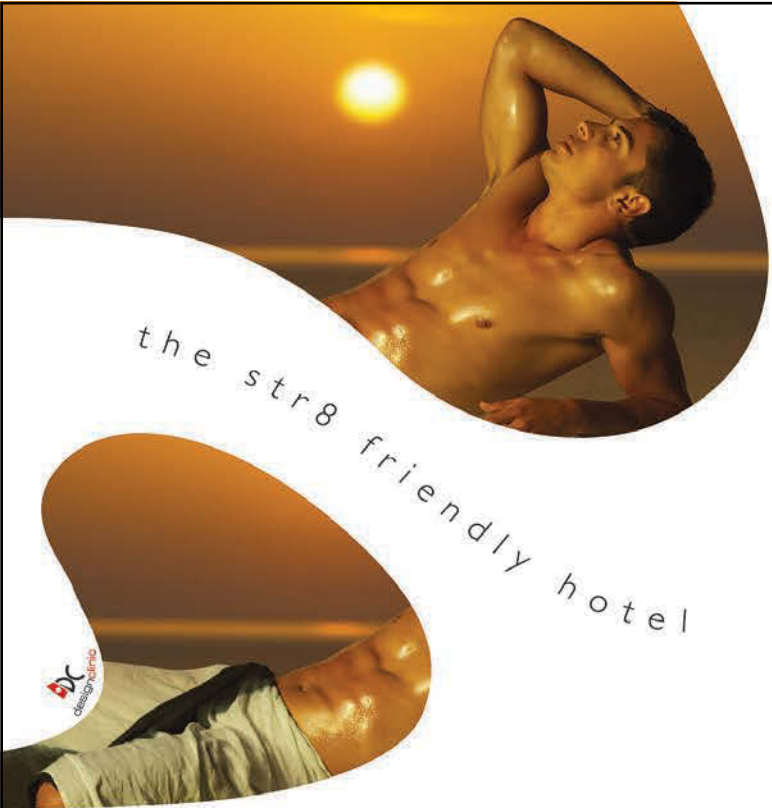
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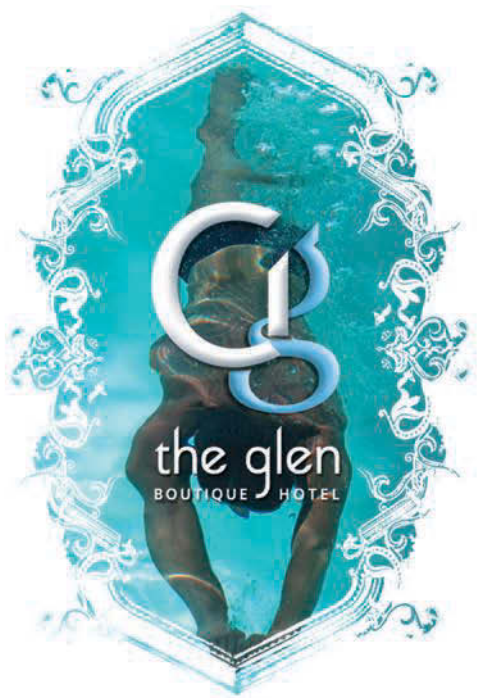
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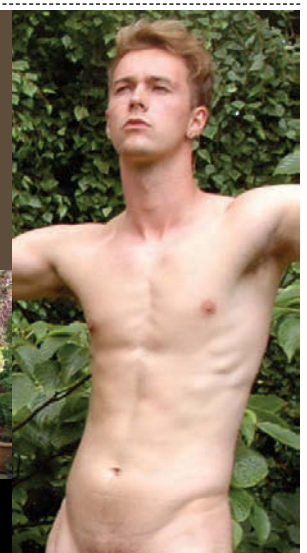
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65, tall, slim, passive, likes music & sport. WLTM M for fun & f/ship. Box 912079 or text ☐GT 912079

SLIM, BLOND, BLUE-EYED

Gay M, 40s, easy-going, well-travelled, likes all music. WLTM caring, genuine gay M, 25-50, for f/ship, fun, poss r/ship. N. Yorks. Box 679217

SHAVEN-HEADED BIKER

Slim guy, 38, WLTM other biker M, 35-45, for nights in/out & LTR. Liverpool. Box 587307

DOMINANT

M, 56, seeks submissive, young, pretty she-male or CD, 18-30. Fife. Box 621616 or text ☐GT 621616

REGULAR FUN TIMES

Young, early 60s M, seeks guy 30-40s for regular fun times, maybe LTR. Can accom. Gloucs. Box 618548 or text ☐GT 618548

ENJOY LIFE TOGETHER

Sincere M, 67, WLTM younger M to enjoy life with & to have fun together. Cheshire. Box 254819

ACTIVE, SEXY

Slim Bi M, 62, WLTM gay or bi M, 50+, for LTR. Merseyside. Box 912686

COME FOR A BEER

Bi M, 50, 5'10", slim, smooth, shaven head. WLTM adventurous M, up for fun. Bucks/Ldn. Box 728099 or text ☐GT 728099

CALL ME NOW!

M, 30, WLTM TV or CD, 18-55, for r/ship. Can accom & travel. Glasgow. Box 967536

GENUINE, SINGLE

Retired M, young 60s, passive & feminine. Seeks assertive single gentleman, 60-80, for f/ship, fun & nice r/ship. Mancs. Box 129679

ACTIVE & FIT

Bi retired M, 68, n/s, seeks M for mutual activities, can accommodate. N Ldn & S. Herts. Box 729497

A NEW ADVENTURE

M, 58, 5'11", dark hair, medium build. WLTM outgoing, experienced M, similar age or older, willing to take the lead. Essex. Box 732677 or text ☐GT 732677

TACTILE, PASSIVE

M, 55, 5'10", medium build, clean shaven, GSOH, broad minded. WLTM n/s, assertive M, for f/ship. Berks. Box 296107

SHOW ME THE WAY

Inexperienced M, 43, new to all this. Seeks convincing TV to fulfill his needs. Ldn. Box 220569

DRESS TO IMPRESS

Very friendly TV, 46, WLTM regular M partner, 30+, for adult fun. Can accom. Hants. Box 500144

FRIENDSHIP FIRST

Bi M, 58. WLTM M to get together & maybe become good friends. Ldn. Box 260237

MEETING NEW FRIENDS

Genuine M, 34. Hobbies include swimming, horse riding & snooker. WLTM M for f/ship. Cardiff. Box 300977

SMART, EX-PROFESS

Gent, 70+, seeks obedient gent for f/ship & more. Must be smart. Stockport. Box 703512

CLOSE AT HAND

Youthful 60s M, 6', well made. Seeks assertive, older gent, 70+, for close r/ship. Berks. Box 865483

OPEN-MINDED

Easy-going M, 59, medium-stocky build. Looking for M, 60-70, for fun & f/ship. Wrexham. Box 445925 or text ☐GT 445925

SOULMATE SOUGHT

Gay M, 51, 5'9", 18st, loves meals out, travel & staying in. WLTM genuine M for f/ship, hopefully LTR. Chester. Box 317742

ARE YOU THE ONE?

Fun M, 70s, likes gardening. Seeks kind, friendly M for fun & f/ship, maybe more. Chester. Box 464979

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TONED, SHAVEN

M, 50, 11st. WLTM like-minded, open-minded M for regular fun. Herts/Ldn. Box 299249

SHOW ME THE WAY

M, 60, 5'10", likes dressing up. WLTM M, 60-70, for fun times. Essex. Box 374537

NEW FOR YOU

M, 46, novice CD. Seeks other CD's or TV's for fun & to show me the way. Ldn. Box 309226

VERY FIT

Athletic, Bi M, mid 60's. WLTM slim, smooth, Asian, professional M. Texts only pls. Wilts. Box 112070 or text ☐GT 112070

SLIM-BUILT

M, 38, w/e, WLTM CD, 50-80, for long-term f/ship. Greater Mancs. Box 706589

LET'S HIT THE TOWN

Guy, 29, seeks nice cross-dressing guy to go out with. Middx. Box 866762

LET THE FUN TIMES BEGIN

Mature Bi M, 50s, WLTM gay or Bi M for fun & f/ship. Belfast. Box 964019

LOOKING FOR FUN

Nice looking, Bi M, 56, slim, smooth. Seeks M for fun & f/ship. Surrey. Box 781066 or text ☐GT 781066

LET'S SEE WHAT HAPPENS

M, 58, into classic cars & animal welfare. WLTM younger M for f/ship, poss romantic r/ship. Basingstoke. Box 850051

FAIR, SMOOTH

Young looking, Bi M, 62, slim, 5'10", blue eyes, animal lover & fun loving. WLTM friendly M, 40-70. Wrexham. Box 330409

GENUINE, SINCERE

M, 79, enjoys travel, history & sport. WLTM M, 18-40, for fun & f/ship. Powys. Box 691904

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